



STATION CLOSURE SAFETY WARNING

Report by David Callaghan

CLOSING Halesowen Police Station would put community safety at risk, say a group of the town's councillors.

They have written to West Midlands Police and Crime Commissioner David Jamieson to voice their objections.

More than 700 people signed a petition in October, launched by Halesowen and Rowley Regis MP James Morris, after it was announced by West Midlands Police that the town would lose its police station.

Dudley and Stourbridge are also among the 28 bases across the region that are to be closed and sold in order for West Midlands Police to save £8.6 million.

Commissioner Jamieson has backed the move, saying 'officers, not buildings' keep people safe.

But in a letter, eight out of the 12 Halesowen councillors oppose the plans, saying the removal of the police station 'will threaten the community's safety'.

The letter to the commissioner states: "We feel that closing Halesowen Police Station to save money when currently West Midlands Police, with your full support, have spent around £55m to purchase and renovate Lloyd House, a prime piece of real estate in the most expensive part of the West Midlands, is not giving the residents of Halesowen value for money in the service that the police provide."

Mr Morris has already called on the commissioner to postpone closure plans in Halesowen, where the Laurel Lane based is scheduled to shut in January 2017. He said West Midlands Police had more than £179m in reserves and had underspent by £7m.

Hypocrisy

However, Halesowen Labour councillors Ian Cooper, Donella Russell and Hilary Bills did not sign the letter to David Jamieson.

Councillor Bills said: "We won't put our names to a letter which is factually incorrect and breath-taking in its hypocrisy. Under George Osborne's austerity cuts West Midlands Police has been hit harder than anywhere else, despite the fact that Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary rates West Midlands Police as outstandingly efficient."

"Comments about the reserves are naïve to say the least, most of the reserves are already earmarked to ensure the books can be balanced up to 2018/19. Some reserves have to be kept in case of a major incident, such as a terrorist attack."

Belle Vale's Councillor Simon Phipps said: "Whilst I am disappointed that not all Halesowen councillors signed this letter, I am confident that this will clearly demonstrate to Mr Jamieson that the majority of Halesowen councillors are against his proposals to close our police station."

SANTA GETS A WARM BLACK COUNTRY WELCOME



Santa Dave gets a warm welcome from friendly elves Sarah Dibb, left, and Hayley Albright at the Mad As A Hatter tea rooms

HE may not have been welcome at a Birmingham shopping centre, but Santa was asked to bring festive cheer to a party shop in the Black Country.

David Upson, aged 69, from Oldbury, known locally as Santa Dave, said he was disappointed that during his annual trip around the area to bring festive cheer he was turned away from the Bullring shopping centre by security guards.

But Mr Upson aimed to inject some festive fun with regular visits to tea rooms and crafts venue Mad As A Hatter in Bearwood in the

run up to Christmas Day. Mr Upson, a retired land surveyor, has been dressing up as Santa for the last 16 years and regularly visits Birmingham's German market in costume.

He said: "I thoroughly enjoy playing Santa and love the Mad as a Hatter shop, I've been involved with them for as long as they've been opened."

"I love talking to the kids and making this time of year extra special for them. The shop is a lovely, friendly and quirky place and I see it as a home from home."

"It's a great place to bring Santa season to

Bearwood and I'm sure the kids are going to be very excited."

Owner of Mad As A Hatter Hayley Albright said: "Dave spends a lot of time with us in the shop and has an incredibly good heart. He does so much for charity without charging anything."

Sophie Diner, Bullring spokeswoman, said: "Our customers are welcome to walk through the centre in costumes. However, if any of our visitors in costume wish to engage with other customers' children for photos, there are certain procedures that need to be applied."

HOUSING

Homes on business site given go-ahead

FOURTEEN homes will be built on the site of a former plant hire business in Halesowen.

An application to build the properties on the site of the former Power House building on Whitehall Road, which has been demolished, has been given the green light by Dudley Council.

The building was formerly used by Power Plant Hire. The new development will include a pair of two-bedroom homes, six three-bedroom homes and five four-bedroom properties. There will also be a bungalow.

COUNCIL

Public having their say on cuts budget

MORE than 1,500 people have already had their say on Dudley Council's controversial budget plans.

The authority is looking to make £20 million worth of cuts over three years.

Under the proposals Dudley Museum and Art Gallery would close and up to 275 jobs would be axed. Library opening hours could be cut with public toilets, dog bins and gritting lorries also in the firing line.

Proposals also include a council tax increase of just under two per cent.

TECHNOLOGY

Festive broadband boost for thousands

MORE than 6,000 businesses and households in the Black Country are now able to access high-speed fibre broadband as part of a rolling programme from BT and the Black Country Local Enterprise Partnership.

The Black Country Broadband Project said parts of Dudley and neighbouring Black Country boroughs are among the latest areas to benefit. These include Halesowen North, Blackheath, Langley, Rowley, Bristnall, Tividale and parts of Oldbury. Engineers have so far installed more than 90 fibre broadband road-side cabinets.



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Police 'fail to identify young at-risk'

WEST Midlands Police is failing to protect children from abuse and checks on sex offenders are not being carried out, a damning report says.

Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary has demanded further action after inspectors found: Officers failing to recognise children at risk of exploitation despite clear warning signs; lack of training resulting in 'poor investigations'; 250 sex of-

fender checks not carried out. Also listed: Year-long delays for analysis of computers and other electronic devices in a huge backlog; children missing more than 10 times without any action to protect them and youths unnecessarily kept overnight in cells.

Seventeen out of 21 cases of child sex exploitation looked at by inspectors were deemed to be 'inade-

quate' or 'required improvement'. The revelations led to West Midlands MEP Bill Etheridge to ask: "What the hell is going on?"

But West Midlands Police says it is already taking action to address concerns with how it handles cases of child sexual abuse. Assistant Chief Constable Carl Foulkes, who heads the force's public protection units, said senior officers were also acting

on two other reports produced by inspectors relating to domestic violence and vulnerable victims.

Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary said the force was improving how it dealt with protecting children but raised concerns and issued a list of recommendations for senior officers to address.

ACC Foulkes said: "I welcome this scrutiny."

More needs to be done to protect our children

Report by Rob Golledge

MORE needs to be done to ensure children in the West Midlands are protected from sexual abuse, a police inspector has said

Her Majesty's Inspector of Constabulary Wendy Williams said West Midlands Police has improved how it deals with vulnerable children, but has warned that some youngsters are still at risk.

She said the force had 'partially achieved' addressing concerns previously raised by inspectors last year and praised bosses. She also highlighted good examples of investigations.

But her report found that not all officers had the right training, sex offenders were not being checked as regularly as they should, and long delays were caused in analysing electronic devices and with the Crown Prosecution Service.

She said: "It is clear from this follow up inspection West Midlands Police has made progress in particular areas since our initial inspection. We were encouraged to find a clear commitment to improving child protection services, which is reflected in the significant increase in officers and staff in public protection units.

"We also found good examples of investigations by the force, particularly when children were identified as being at further risk of immediate harm.

Inconsistent

"Despite these encouraging signs, there is still work the force needs to do to improve as child sexual exploitation is still dealt with inconsistently across the force area, although the situation is getting better.

"The response to children who regularly go missing from home also requires further improvement, although inspectors were pleased to see that in most cases officers and staff understood the link between children who regularly go missing and sexual exploitation.

"We have asked West Midlands Police to provide us with an updated action plan, to see how it will incorporate the findings in our report into the work it is already doing.

"Depending on its response, Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary may revisit the force again."

West Midlands Police and Crime Commissioner David Jamieson said: "We recognise the recommendations in this report and will continue to work with our partners to deliver on these. Protecting children is an absolute priority of mine and West Midlands Police.

"I have made it a priority to set up multi-agency



Lonely and vulnerable – child sexual abuse victim

(posed by a model)

safeguarding hubs in each local authority. Three have been set-up so far and plans are in place for the rest of the force area.

"West Midlands Police is now publishing a summary of data on child sexual exploitation to bring this issue out into the open. This is a serious report with important recommendations that I will hold the police to account to deliver."

Responding to the report, Wolverhampton South East MP Pat McFadden said: "After everything that has been exposed about child sexual abuse in recent years it is very important that the police and all the agencies involved learn from what has gone wrong in the past.

"I think efforts are being made and those should be acknowledged, but where the report makes criticisms or identifies gaps it is essential there is an open-minded and full response.

Town's MP hosts mental health forum for experts

THE challenges facing mental health care in the future have been discussed at a special forum hosted by a Black Country MP.

The event at Lapal House in Halesowen featured representatives from a range of organisations and service users who discussed ideas of how to tackle some of the major issues facing mental health care.

These included ways of improving clinical responses to those in crisis, how to further engage carers in the treatment of those they care for and how further peer-to-peer support can be used.

The event was chaired by charity Re-Think Mental Illness' national Director for External Affairs, Brian Dow.

Experience

Rowley Regis and Halesowen MP James Morris, who organised the forum, said: "I wanted to organise a local mental health forum because I think it is really important that we have these conversations.

"One in four people will experience mental ill-health at some point during their life and I want to know what local people feel should be done to help shape future services."

The event was attended by more than 20 people from organisations such as Dudley Clinical Commissioning Group, Dudley Mind, Re-think Mental Illness Carers Group, local councillors and a GP.

Boy charged over towpath robbery

A 15-YEAR-OLD boy has been charged with robbery following an attack on a canal towpath in Netherton.

The youth, who is from Netherton and cannot be named for legal reasons, was arrested on December 14 and has been charged with two counts of robbery.

He was remanded in custody at Dudley Magistrates Court last week and was due to appear at the same court this week.

It comes after CCTV footage was released by police last week after a young couple were targeted along the canal near Cradley Road.

Festive frenzy on 'Panic Saturday'

TENS of thousands of fevered festive customers battled for bargain buys on crowded high streets and in shopping centres across the West Midlands at the weekend as many stores kicked off their January sales early.

Saturday — dubbed Panic Saturday — was the busiest day for many stores and the frenzy continued on Sunday.

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THE BEST OF PETER RHODES



YOU really must excuse the older generation for not joining the kids in punching the air in celebration as Tim Peake begins his tour of duty on the International Space Station. One newspaper's science writer, who looks about 12, trills that this is "a giant leap in British space exploration." Let's keep it in perspective, eh? Major Tim is 250 miles high. In 1969 we watched man land on the moon which is 250,000 miles away. In 1971 and 1972 astronauts used the Lunar Roving Vehicle. That's right, kids. More than 40 years ago, blokes were driving a car on the moon. Back then we assumed that by 2015 we'd have colonies on Mars, but the money ran out. So while a 250-mile hop into orbit is as courageous and inspiring as ever, let's not fool ourselves. The giant leap into space is still on the drawing board.

WHAT is it with ghosts in TV dramas these days? In River (BBC1), the detective was haunted by his dead colleague.



In The Bridge (BBC4) a cop is haunted by his missing, presumed dead, wife and kids. And then Luther (BBC1) returned this week and blow me if our hero (Idris Elba) isn't chatting with the shade of his murdered buddy Justin (Warren Brown). Shakespeare would have loved it but how odd to see so many ghosts in the 21st century.

AND excuse us, too, for being old-duffery and unhygienic about the new blockbuster, Star Wars: The Force Awakens. I dare say it is brilliant. And yet after so many Star Wars films we all know more or less what to expect. So let me take you back to an encounter with the utterly unexpected, to the third row in the stalls in a cinema in Lewisham in 1977 when the original Star Wars burst upon the wide, wide screen and our little gang was utterly gobsmacked. What a night that was. To this day I cannot see the damaged C3PO spilling Princess Leia's message: "Help me Obi-Wan Kenobi. You're my only hope" without blinking away a tear.

"TRUMP loses wind farm legal challenge." Best headline of the week.

Don't miss Peter Rhodes every Monday to Friday in your Express & Star

MP calls for air duty cut to boost economy

DUDLEY North MP Ian Austin has stepped up his campaign to cut Air Passenger Duty in a bid to boost regional airports such as Birmingham.

The devolved governments in Scotland and Wales are planning to cut the duty, which could leave regional airports in England at a competitive disadvantage.

Mr Austin has tabled a series of urgent Parliamentary questions challenging the Chancellor George Osborne to set out the impact higher Air Passenger Duty will have on Birmingham International Airport and businesses in places like Dudley.

The MP wants the Government to back proposals to match the cut for non-congested airports in England to offer local people cheaper flights and boost economic growth in the regions.

Intervene

He said: "The Government is running out of time to intervene before Wales and Scotland cut air taxes and put airports like Birmingham at a competitive disadvantage."

"Cutting Air Passenger Duty or regional airports would help local people afford a well-earned break at the same time as boosting the local economy."

Meanwhile, Birmingham International Airport is on course for a record-breaking

By David Cosgrove

year after nearly 700,000 passengers passed through its terminal in November. The West Midlands gateway to the world is expected to reach a total of 10 million passengers this year, making 2015 the busiest in the airport's 77-year history.

Bosses are already predicting another record-breaker in 2016, with a string of airlines to carry even more passengers in and out of Birmingham on new routes.

November's passenger figure of 693,033 was 7.1 per cent up on the same month a year ago, with long-haul flights up 21.4 per cent.

Paul Kehoe, chief executive of Birmingham Airport, said: "November's figures are extremely encouraging particularly in regard to long haul services. We expect December to also be very strong. If December turns out to be another record-breaking month it will be the eleventh one this year."

Charlie's card is a winner



Charlie Southwell with his winning Christmas card design

YEAR Five pupil Charlie Southwell has won the Halesowen Chronicle Christmas Card Challenge with his drawing of a reindeer and a snowman skiing in the snow.

Now Charlie's festive image has been turned into a set of Christmas cards.

Pupils at Manor Way Primary Academy, in Brier Mill Eoad, Halesowen, were invited to create designs for the competition and were sponsored by local businesses.

The Halesowen Chronicle published the entries and then readers voted for their favourite design, with Charlie's proving the most popular.

Funds

Charlie received a framed reproduction of his card and a set of 25 of the cards to send to friends and family.

The Chronicle also donated £50 towards school funds as a thank you for the school's involvement.

Charlie's entry sponsor was Barking Glad dog groomers in Wassell Road, Halesowen, an 11-year-old business run by Lynne and Bob Styles.

Hospital's experts in link with Cape Town

A TEAM of heart and lung experts from Birmingham Children's Hospital has returned from an inaugural trip to South Africa to share their expertise on using life-saving equipment.

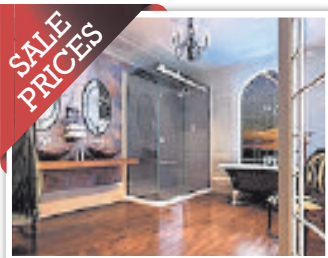
The five-day visit to the Red Cross War Memorial Children's Hospital in Cape Town was organised as part of a planned longer-term collaboration to introduce and develop a new service in South Africa's only specialist paediatric centre.

Extracorporeal membrane oxygenation (ECMO) is the technique of providing both cardiac and respiratory support. The specialist ECMO machine provides an artificial heart and lung function for young patients, allowing organs to rest and heal.

Since starting its own ECMO service in 2006 more than 80 children and young people have received this type of intensive care treatment at Birmingham Children's Hospital, designated as the UK's only centre of excellence by the international Extracorporeal Life Support Organization. It is hoped the development of the ECMO service in Cape Town – the first for children in Africa – will lead to a cardiac transplant service.

Tim Jones, who has been a heart surgeon at Birmingham Children's Hospital for 10 years, said: "We're looking forward to further developing our partnership in the months and years ahead."

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Merger plans for two major city hospitals

BIRMINGHAM'S Children's Hospital and Women's Hospital have revealed they want to merge, bringing the two together as early as next summer.

The move could mean developing a new joint hospital at Edgbaston.

This would mean closing the Children's Hospital site in Steelhouse Lane and moving onto a site next to the Women's and Queen Elizabeth hospitals.

Alternatively chiefs say they will also look at the affordability and feasibility of developing their existing sites. The hospitals say the merger announcement is the result of months of joint work "to develop a shared vision for the best children's and women's healthcare built around the whole family".

Appointed

It was accelerated when Children's Hospital chief executive Sarah-Jane Marsh was also appointed to head the Women's Hospital this summer.

The two hospitals say work will start in January on preparing an outline business. The target date for merger is late summer next year.

The Children's Hospital opened in Steelhouse Lane in 1862 with 16 beds. In 1917 it moved to Ladywood but returned to its original home in 1998. It now treats around 270,600 youngsters a year.

No election decision until the new year

A DECISION on a by-election following the death of a long-serving Dudley councillor will not be made until the new year.

Mary Roberts, who had represented the St James's ward since 2007, died last month after a long illness.

Councillor Roberts, who was re-elected to the ward in 2011 and in May this year, was vice-chairwoman of the authority's audit and standards committee.

£2m all-in-one community hubs get the green light

Tammi has 14in-locks lopped off



Tammi Alloway-Jones, aged seven, has her hair cut off for charity by her aunt, stylist Faye Alloway, 28

A SEVEN-year-old girl from Cradley Heath had a whopping 14 inches of her hair cut to donate to a cancer charity which provides wigs to children.

Tammi Alloway-Jones first thought of the idea back in September with her aunt, Faye Alloway, 28, and mother Claire, 35.

She thought because her hair was so long, rather than just have it cut off, it could be donated to a good cause.

With the help of hairdresser Faye, Tammi, who goes to Crestwood Park School in Kingswinford, cut off her

locks at Unique Hair Designs and Beauty in Turners Lane, Brierley Hill. She is giving the hair to The Little Princess Trust, which provides wigs for children having cancer treatment.

Mother Claire said: "I think it's a fantastic thing what Tammi has done and I couldn't be any prouder of her."

"She was more excited rather than nervous and loved all the pictures being taken. She really couldn't have been any more at ease."

"She was only meant to have 10 inches cut off but ended up having

14, but she didn't mind at all. Little Princess Trust is an incredible charity which helps so many kids going through such a terrible time. Tammi had her heart set on giving the hair to them. We posted it off and she'll be receiving a certificate from them thanking her for her efforts."

"She loves her new hair and keeps waking up wanting to have a different style to go to school with."

To donate to Tammi's fundraising visit mydonate.bt.com/fundraisers/tammiallowayjones

DUDLEY Council has given the green light for around £2 million to be spent on creating new community hubs in the borough that will bring different services together.

The move agreed by the council cabinet comes as the council looks to make multi-million pound savings by selling buildings and merging services on single sites.

The multi-purpose hubs are part of the authority's 'innovative transformation plans' in the face of Government funding cuts.

Council Leader Pete Lowe, said: "Our work to be a community council would go to a completely new level with these ambitious plans to transform how the council works in the heart of communities."

"The financial challenges we face due to the national cuts are massive but by working together with our community we know we can establish services which will help people to be more self-sufficient."

"Whilst we will continue to make service savings where possible and encourage an 'every penny counts' culture at the authority we are also keen to explore this bigger and more innovative approach which we hope can generate tens of millions of pounds worth of savings."

The council will look to sell off non-essential council buildings as part of the ground-breaking scheme.

Invest

Council bosses have already set out plans to save £21m over the next three years, which will take total savings to nearly £100m since 2010.

However, due to continued Government funding cuts, finance bosses are still forecasting a shortfall of close to £50m.

Councillors agreed to set aside £2m to fund the invest-to-save Transformation for the Future scheme, which will help to plug the £50m shortfall.

New hospice chief will take the reins

A BLACK Country hospice charity has announced the appointment of a new chief executive.

Claire Marshall, currently commercial director and deputy chief executive of Birmingham St Mary's Hospice, will take up her post at Compton Hospice in March.

She will join Compton Hospice following a 21-year career in the voluntary sector which has included roles at Sue Ryder Care, Cancer Research UK and Air Ambulance.

Mrs Marshall said: "I am thrilled to have been offered the opportunity to lead Compton Hospice, a charity which has a wide range of services and a wonderful reputation for delivering exceptional care in the local community. Having started my professional career in the hospice movement over 20 years ago, and also having family experience of the outstanding care provided by hospices, I am delighted to join the Compton team."

Ron Middleton will retire in March after 18 years as chief executive.

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IN MY VIEW

with Mark Andrews



Tesco is washing its hands of bag snags

A COUPLE of weeks ago I got on a train from Wolverhampton to Birmingham. It was filthy, passengers were packed like sardines into the drab, cramped carriages. Somebody had drawn a phallic symbol in the thick coating of dirt on the windows.

And the operator responsible for this service? It was one of the many services run by Deutschebahn, the German state-owned rail operator. They run quite a lot of trains around the West Midlands these days. Some of them very badly.

Bear that in mind next time somebody tells you that nationalisation is the solution for all the ills on our railways.

ACCORDING to a recent report, encouraging people to wash their hands for 30 seconds at a time could prevent up to 25,000 deaths a year.

Apparently the average Joe's hands are a haven for filth, bacteria and faeces.

The study, which has prompted Government and medical bosses to launch a national hand washing campaign, reports that three in 10 commuters have poo on their hands as they go about their daily, ahem, business. Now remind me. Why did I never join the Freemasons?

GREAT news for supporters of the carrier bag charges. According to Tesco, use of plastic carriers has dropped by 78 per cent since the new rules came in.

The company says it has exceeded all expectations, with many people asking for a "bag-free delivery" when they order their shopping online. There have also been one or two mumbblings about "changing people's attitudes". Of course there have. The great and the good are never happier than when they are changing people's attitudes.

And you know what? That's exactly what I was thinking when I was stumbling around town with my arms full of shopping, stooping every few yards to pick up the pork scratchings, sweets, bath products and tulip bulbs that I was carrying back to the car.

Still, on balance, I still think this is marginally preferable to the alternative, which seems to be walking around with your pockets stuffed with 'bags for life' and looking like Roy Cropper.

One thing did strike me though: doesn't it make life much easier for shoplifters now people are wandering into stores carrying goods they have bought elsewhere? And more to the point, doesn't it make life incredibly hard for shop assistants who, on top of their normal duties, now have to decide whether the customer's arms were really that full of shopping when they came through the door?

Did anybody give any consideration to that problem when deciding whether to introduce the new law? Thought not. Still, as long as it changes people's attitudes, that's the main thing.



Commission chairman, Baroness Butler-Sloss in her office



Rev Neil Robbie at Holy Trinity Church, in West Bromwich



Rev Canon Andrew Wickens, of St James The Great, Eve Hill

Are we now facing a crisis in Christianity?

Leading Christians in the region have been standing firm in the wake of a landmark report. Report by **LISA WRIGHT**

"TO say this is no longer a Christian country is taking it a bit far, but I would say it is fair to say it is a very inclusive country."

These are the words of the Reverend Prebendary David Wright from St Peter's Church in Wolverhampton, in the wake of a landmark report on religion – which found Britain was no longer just a Christian country.

The report published by the Commission on Religion and Belief in Public Life said there had been a 'general decline' in Christian affiliation – with two in five people now identifying as such – coupled with a move away from mainstream denominations to evangelical and Pentecostal churches.

Islam, Hinduism and Sikhism have also overtaken Judaism as the largest non-Christian faiths in Britain.

Among the 'striking' trends, the report said, was a rise in the number of people who identified as non-religious – now amounting to almost half the UK population.

But Baroness Butler-Sloss, who chaired the commission, said issues such as the Paris terrorist attacks and the banning of a Church of England advert in cinemas showed religious beliefs are still central to society.

However, now church leaders from across the region maintained that Christianity was still an important faith in this country.

"Britain is a country where there remains a significant Christian presence," added Rev Preb Wright.

"A significant Christian influence and where significant numbers of people are still practising Christians or would trace their affiliations, although may not be active, but it is also a country that embraces other faiths.

"We are a multi-faith society built on firmly Christian faiths."



Rev David Wright, at St Peter's Church, who has commented on a landmark report on religion

While Neil Robbie, the vicar at the Holy Trinity Church in West Bromwich, said: "Our public institutions, government structures, education system, health care system and justice system. These have all been built over a millennia by Christian thinkers.

"It's not as simple to say we are no longer a Christian nation because people don't believe. For us not to be a Christian nation there would have to be a dissolution of these systems and institutions.

"Secular thinkings are squatting in the house that Christians built and what they are saying is look at the house we built, when actually what they are doing is demolishing it.

"We don't want to give credit to people who have shaped our society."

Janet Bailey, chief organiser at St Luke's Church in Cannock, who celebrated their 900th anniversary this year, said: "We recog-

nise here at St Lukes that a lot of people don't have a faith, but we still have a very strong congregation and do not feel that is going to change any time soon.

"I don't agree or disagree with what has been said but we live in a multi-cultural society and this is something we have to accept, and really should applaud."

And Rev Rob Farmer, of St Mark's Parish in Sheffield, said: "I can understand why people do say we are no longer a Christian country but I believe everybody has some kind of spirituality in them.

"We have a very healthy congregation and upon engaging with people who come to St Mark's, we are told they thoroughly enjoy the experience here and that is all we can ask."

The report also said the number of Church of England bishops who sit as peers in the House of Lords should be cut to make way for leaders



Rev Rob Farmer, of St Mark's in Sheffield

of other faiths. Rev Canon Andrew Wickens, of St James The Great, Eve Hill, who is chairman of Dudley Interfaith Network, said he believed the report 'merits study'.

He also said the recommendation to reduce the number of Bishops in the House of Lords needed to be considered as the country becomes more diverse.

"I welcome anything that contributes to debates about the place of religion in our common life so I am sure that this is a report that merits study by people. The Church of England has sought to serve the whole of the local community – we offer support to all.

"We have bishops in the House of Lords. It's only right and proper that the whole of our society is represented. At a national level it makes sense that the people who represent us are taken from broad section of society," he added.

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Rowers stick to dry land to back ocean challenge



Dudley Rowing Club members Stephen Knight and Tina Boothroyd are pictured taking part in a charity 'rowathon' at Netherton

AS their friends attempt to row the Atlantic Ocean, members of a club in Dudley are matching them mile-for-mile on dry land.

Dudley Rowing Club member and biology teacher Lee Felton, aged 30, and software engineer Sean Lannon, 31, were this due to embark on what is known as the 'The World's Toughest Race', crossing 3,000 miles of the Atlantic Ocean from La Gomera, in the Canary Islands, to Antigua in the Caribbean. They are raising awareness for charities Rape Crisis England & Wales and Sport for Freedom.

After keeping their Square One Atlantic boat in storage at Dudley Rowing Club's headquarters at Lodge Farm Reservoir, Netherton, club chairman Tina Boothroyd became inspired by the boys idea and decided to create an indoor rowing event to raise money for the same causes.

Tina, 55, from Dudley, said: "Because the boys are doing such a monumental challenge, I just thought, why can't we do something like that on land. The aim is to row 4,828,032 metres, the equivalent of the 3,000 miles Lee and Sean are doing."

"We want to raise at least £1,000 for these causes. If we got to £2,000 I'd be

overjoyed, anything above that I would be absolutely jubilant.

"We've had great support from rowing clubs across Bewdley, Stourbridge and Worcester, staff at Dudley council and Action Heart, just to name a few groups who have backed us."

Over the past 12 months both Lee and Sean, have been collecting donations and sponsorship. The pair will row in two-hour shifts 24 hours a day to cross the ocean raising over £100,00 for the two charities.

The race comes at the end of the hurricane season, with both men hoping to gain a benefit from the easterly trade winds and Atlantic currents.

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A spectacular night-time view of the Christmas German Market



An amazing view of the festive-looking jib with the cityscape below



Forboding skies threaten inclement weather as the darkness starts to fall



The lit up crane shines in the night sky, with St Philip's Cathedral nearby

Brum's best high lights

THE tallest crane in the West Midlands is offering some spectacular night-time views across Birmingham's cityscape.

The tower crane is currently sitting on top of the NatWest Tower, on Colmore Row. The building is being demolished to make way for a new 30-storey building that will be the tallest office block outside of London.

In the meantime the 330 ft tall crane, supplied to the project by Radius NFT, has an unparalleled view across Birmingham and to the countryside beyond.

The crane itself is now part of the cityscape after undergoing a festive makeover.

More than 9,000 flashing lights have been installed along the 118ft long front jib and 50ft of the crane. The crane was erected over three days and two nights in September, to aid with the demolition of the redundant office building and make way for Rockspring and Sterling's £60m office tower at 103, Colmore Row.

Three highly-skilled aerial technicians from Northampton-based Radius spent six-and-a-half hours installing more than 800ft of LED lights, weighing more than 50kg, along the jib and counter-jib. At 346 ft high, with the apex at

807ft above sea level, 103 Colmore Row will be the tallest office building under construction in the UK outside London.

In addition to 211,000 sq ft of office space over 19 floors, the landmark development will include a 8,000 sq ft restaurant with a 3,250 sq ft 'lambert' space at the top of the building.

Eric Linden, European director at Rockspring, said: "We are planning to illuminate the lantern space at the top of the new building. The Christmas lights are a taste of what this could be like - they can be seen from miles away."

The dazzling multi-coloured display will continue daily over Christmas and the New Year.



Dusk falls on the city with Centenary Square's big wheel all lit up and the library next to it

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Great show for a Chuckle or two

PANTO REVIEW

By Mark Shipp

HANDS up. Most people leaving the theatre will greet people with a big "Helloor". I know I did.

Welcome to pantomime the Chuckle Brothers style.

I wouldn't say it was their finest work, that dubious honour goes to their collaboration with Tinchy Stryder. But there were laughs aplenty, particularly when they couldn't keep a straight face themselves.

Taking the parts of the Brothers Smee, they were almost given their own mini-series during this reworking of Peter Pan. And each time their arrival was met to the tune of Chuckle, Chuckle Vision.

Frilly

Audience members can expect to get wet, and even 'pied' during the two-hour long show, but it's worth it just to hear Barry's attempts to say Smith's Crisps. Mind you, I'm not sure I want to relive the image of him in just a pair of frilly pants.

The jokes come thick and fast, like "Where's my buccaneers?" "On the side of your head but don't use that language."

And local references such as: "We're in jeopardy."

"Where's that?"

"Near Bilston."

"No, we are in danger."

"Where's danger?"

"Near Willenhall."

Of course, it wouldn't be a panto without a touch of adult humour, but to re-tell all the jokes would be spoiling it for those who have not yet been.

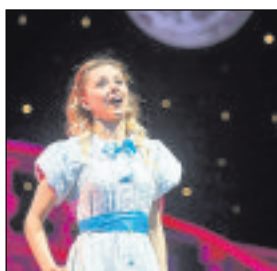
For anyone that hasn't, it runs until January 24, so what are you waiting for? The lavish production is both musically and technically brilliant and is



Paul and Barry Chuckle as the Brothers Smee in Peter Pan



Captain Hook, alias John Altman



Hannah Nicholls as Wendy

quality family entertainment - with more than a hint of slapstick.

There was contemporary music in the form of Jess Glynne's Rather Be and Taylor Swift's Bad Blood.

The latter was performed by John Altman, better known as EastEnders' bad boy Nick Cotton in his role as another villain, Captain Hook. Though playing up to the role, and with the odd reference to his soap character, he

was quite inaudible during his singing routine. The same could not be said of Kimmy Edwards as Tiger Lily however, with her terrific voice. Ross Carpenter is an endearing Pan, while ex-Coronation Street actress Lucy Evans sparkles as Tinkerbell. Hannah Nicholls also shines as Wendy, while credit must go to the Darling brothers, and the rest of the ensemble that made up the Lost Boys and pirates.

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No change

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There will be no garden waste collections between Monday 21 December and Friday 1 January

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£30k raised for children's hospital by NEC Group staff

THE NEC Group has raised almost £30,000 for Birmingham Children's Hospital after making it the centre of its charity fundraising efforts over the last year.

As well as the NEC exhibition site at Solihull and the Genting Arena, the company also takes in the International Convention Centre, Symphony Hall and the Barclaycard Arena – the former NIA – in Birmingham. NEC Group chief executive Paul Thandi presented the cheque for £29,260.66.

Water supply for street hit as pipe bursts

A BURST pipe on Smethwick High Street left dozens of homes without their water supply. The main burst around 3am on December 16, affecting the supply to around 40 homes.

Edgbaston Road had to be closed while emergency repairs were carried out by South Staffs Water, with temporary traffic lights installed in High Street.

South Staffs Water spokeswoman Annalisse Lister said: "To ensure the safety of residents, motorists and employees, it has been necessary to close Edgbaston Road while emergency repairs are carried out.

"The company apologises for any inconvenience this may cause.

"When the supply is restored, it is possible some customers may experience brown or milky water.

"This discolouration is caused because the water main has been disturbed. Customers are advised to run their cold water supply until the water runs clear."

The presentation took place at the company's annual awards event on Tuesday December 15. He said: "Birmingham Children's Hospital does incredible work helping thousands of children and their families from across the West Midlands and beyond every year, and the NEC Group staff really got behind it as their chosen charity."

"I want to thank all of our employees for their donations and the creative ways in which they've raised funds over the last 12 months, and I have great pleasure in handing over this cheque."

Fantastic

Money was raised for the hospital through a variety of activities organised by staff at the Birmingham-based business including food sales, tickets sales contributions and donations.

A spokesperson from Birmingham Children's Hospital said: "We want to say a huge thank you to all of the staff at the NEC Group who helped to raise such a fantastic amount of money for the Hospital. It's because of generous people in organisations like the NEC Group that we are able to help so many children and their families when they need it the most."

The NEC Group will now begin to raise funds for Macmillan, the leading cancer care charity in the UK, after it was chosen as the next charity of the year by employees.

Festive hamper winner announced



Assistant officer Shellie Noakes, winner Pat Hall, Councillor Barbara Price and neighbourhood officer Melanie Watkins

BLACKHEATH resident Pat Hall is the lucky winner of a Christmas hamper following a prize raffle organised by council staff in aid of the Mayor of Sandwell's charity.

Neighbourhood services officers at the Sandwell Local Rowley Regis office wanted to help raise money for

the Mayor's charity, Acorns Children's Hospice.

The raffle raised £165 and the Mayor of Sandwell Councillor Barbara Price visited the office in Payne Street last week.

She thanked the staff for their support and presented the impressive

Christmas hamper to a delighted Mrs Hall.

Councillor Price said: "It was a lovely idea of staff at the Rowley Regis office to do something at Christmas that benefits both residents and my charity. I thank everyone involved and congratulate Pat on her prize."

Emirates to take off with airbus flights

THE world's biggest passenger aircraft is coming to the West Midlands, after airline Emirates revealed it is bringing the first regular flights of its double-decker Airbus A380s to Birmingham Airport next spring.

The giant airliner, which can carry more than 600 passengers at a time, will be flying to and from Dubai every lunchtime from March 27. The move is seen as a major feather in the airport's cap as it finishes up a year likely to see it handle 10 million passengers for the first time in its 77-year history.

Paul Kehoe, chief executive of Birmingham Airport, said: "This is really great news for the airport and our community. The A380 will not only give an additional 188 seats a day from Birmingham but will also offer customers that want to experience the magnificent A380 aircraft an opportunity to now do so from the Midlands region and I'm certain that the service, just like the programme spanning 15 years from Birmingham Airport, will be hugely successful.

"We would like to thank Emirates for its commitment to our region," he added.

Laurie Berryman, Emirates' UK vice president, said: "The A380 is hugely popular amongst our passengers as it provides a unique level of service that has become synonymous with the Emirates brand."

Zoo expert in move to protect lemurs

DUDLEY Zoo's curator has taken on a key role in the international conservation battle to save black lemurs from extinction.

Richard Brown has taken over the European management of the endangered species from zoo director Derek Grove.

Derek recently handed over the reins to Richard who will continue collating the European Endangered Species Programme.

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There was lots of Christmas mail bound for overseas recipients which was being sorted at Castle Church Hall, Stafford back in December 1968



Carole Hurley, John Bunch and Kella Jaundrill got on their bikes in 1984 to take toys to young hospital patients



Dapper photographer gents from the Dudley Herald – Keir Dixon, Graham Gough, Ron Knowles and Geoff Wright were letting their hair down at a Christmas Party back in 1959



The Salvation Army in Walsall fought aliens in a 24-hour computer games marathon in aid of a Christmas fund



The Bedford Williams store was set to leave these premises in Victoria Street, Wolverhampton, in December, 1972

Beginning to look a lot like Christmas

SO MANY different images have evoked Christmas down the years and there's usually been a photographer around to catch them.

From busy postal sorting offices to office parties, the rounds of pictures are much the same in whatever era they are taken.

Featured below, centre left, is one such typical example, published in the Express & Star in January 1975 after Twelfth Night, with children Brian Claw, right, and Michael Foyce, both of Low Hill Wolverhampton, at St Peter's Gardens taking down the nativity scene.

MEMORY LANE

By Simon Stone

Next to this picture is a story of how several residents with health problems were not able to get out over the festive period because the lift had broken down in their Wednesfield tower block.

In the picture were Sarah Williams, Mabel Baker, Shirley Charters and son James. The accompanying story read: "Temper at a Wolverhampton block of flats are sky-high after Christmas spent stranded in the clouds. Families with young children and tenants suffering heart and asthmatic conditions have

been separated from their families by up to 38 flights of stairs.

"They complain that the lifts at Bovey Court in Wednesfield have been constantly breaking down. Sarah Williams lives right at the top of the 19th floor and after two major heart operations has a steel valve put in her heart. She has not been out since Christmas Eve and was unable to visit her family.

"Shirley Charters and her husband had to carry their 10 month old baby together with pram and shopping up 38 flights twice before Christmas. Mrs Mabel Baker, who suffers from asthma and lives on the eighth floor, could not go out over the holiday." Let's hope their next Christmas was better...



Youngsters were saying goodbye to this classic nativity display in St Peter's Gardens, Wolverhampton, in 1975



Nineteen floors up, these families in Wednesfield, were left stranded in their flats over Christmas after the lifts broke in 1976



A 1979 nativity, with, from left, Jasbinder Kaur, Radha Kumari, Ravinda Kaur, and front, Marie Lloyd

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Outing at Stourport led to 60 years of marriage

LOVE is still well and truly in the air for a couple who are celebrating their diamond wedding anniversary.

Even though they both went to Lomey Town School, which used to be on Cradley Heath High Street, Tony and Barbara Hanson never properly met until after they left school.

Their meeting happened in 1952, when Mr Hanson, now aged 82, went on a weekend away with his friends to the riverside resort town of Stourport in Worcestershire.

Mrs Hanson, aged 80, also happened to be there with a few of her friends and they ended up in the same pub together.

Theatre

Mr Hanson said: "I saw this girl and I asked if I could buy her a drink. We met up again at the pub back home. I took her to the Majestic Theatre in Cradley Heath for our first official date.

"One thing led to another and three years later we were married.

Mr Hanson continued: "You could give me all the money in China, I couldn't have done no better with Barbara — she's the love of my life."

The couple, who now live in

Brierley Hill, tied the knot at a little chapel on Holly Bush Street on December 10, 1955, and went on to have a week's honeymoon in Blackpool.

Mrs Hanson worked at a raincoat making company in Netherton before going on to work at BSR in Old Hill assembling record players. Mr Hanson was a moulder for 15 years and later worked all over the country for Russell & Russell as a heating engineer.

They have four children, Sharon, 57, David, 55, Lisa, 47 and Joanne, 45 and are kept busy with their seven grandchildren and three great-grandchildren.

Mrs Hanson said: "I feel extremely proud and happy to have reached this anniversary, it's lovely to have lasted so long.

"We haven't made a fuss really but we had all the family round last week and had a Champagne toast.

"We'll be having a bigger party this week. We've had a wonderful life and have four loving children who have always been there for us."

She added: "We now have our grand kids and great-grand kids to enjoy, we're very happy."



Diamond pair – Barbara and Tony Hanson take a look at cards received for their 60th anniversary

Delayed motorway link roadworks are finally completed

OVERRUNNING motorway roadworks, which caused a year of chaos on surrounding roads, have finally been completed – six months later than expected.

Repair work on the link road off the M6 at Wednesday on to the M5 in West Bromwich finished last week.

It brings to an end 12 months of misery for motorists across the region, caused by sealed off lanes and the closure of the M6 Junction 9 slip road.

The southbound carriageway has returned to full-lane capacity and the slip road reopened.

But bosses have warned there could be up to six overnight closures in the new year on the same stretch in order to complete 'snagging works'.

Highways England project manager Jess Kenny said: "We would like to thank motorists for their patience throughout the year in what has been a long and challenging maintenance programme. It was vital that we did this work and we are pleased to finally have the roadworks removed. In the new year we will need to carry out final pieces of work which will be done overnight and will have minimal impact on motorists."

The work, which was carried out to replace damaged waterproofing along the stretch of motorway, was originally due to be finished in June. But it met a series of delays after it emerged that damage underneath the carriageway was far worse than anticipated.

The job was extended until November but another four-week delay followed after extensive steel corrosion and concrete damage was found.

Police can't go to every crime scene, says chief

THE public cannot expect to see as many bobbies responding to so-called 'lesser crimes', Britain's second highest ranking police officer has said.

West Midlands Police Chief Constable Chris Sims, who retires from his post in January, said police forces had to be 'sensible' how they deployed their officers and could no longer 'resource every call'.

He also said more crime should be reported by victims online in future.

"It would be very hard to think we would maintain that level of visibility that we have got. That is because things like cyber crime and domestic abuse are not threats dealt with by officers patrolling in uniform.

Ambition

"There needs to be a re-balancing of how policing is delivered but I would be concerned if people were burgled and felt that we were not there to protect them.

"We have an ambition to have a better online presence than we do.

"If you are a victim of a lesser crime there is something to be said for reporting it online. I think if I was a victim of a less serious crime, there is a kind of convenience at sitting at home to file a report and get a follow up. It is giving people more of a choice."

He added: "We have to be sensible about how we use police resources given the litany of threats there are, but our primary job is to protect people.

By Rob Gollledge

"Our service is really important to us but it has to sit next to an obligation to protect. There are not many public services now where you can pick the phone up and the service comes to you in an unconditional way. We have to accept we move over a period of time from being literally able to resource every call people make."

Mr Sims has presided over West Midlands Police since 2009 and overseen cuts of £130 million since 2010 and the loss of 3,000 police officers and staff.

He admitted that fewer officers meant the force was unable to do as much as it wanted but that delivering results had not been affected.

But he said the force would struggle if there were further high-scale cuts.

He said: "I think we were able to take a lot of the pain of job losses from the areas that were not impacting on the service and protection of the public. I am not sure we could have continued that for another five years."

Fire destroys cars

FOUR cars and a Portakabin were destroyed by a fire in Cradley Heath believed to have been caused by arsonists.

Crews from Brierley Hill and Haden Cross were called to the blaze in Lower High Street at around 1.20am on Thursday, December 17, and were at the scene for around an hour.

It is believed the fire spread from the building to the cars.

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Wooden Houses Advent Calendar, £40. From John Lewis.



Christmas tree decorations and lights from John Lewis.



Swarovski Christmas Baubles, box of four, £45. From John Lewis.

Key looks for winter



Linea 6.5ft fir tree, £70; champagne tree topper, £10 and the bark tealight holder, £8, all available from House of Fraser.



Set of six glass animal heads, £12. Paperchase.



Matrioskas porcelain ornaments, £140. From Lladro.



Father Christmas tin decorations, £3.99. The Oak Room.



Fox head decoration £4.50. John Lewis.



Traditional Christmas decorations, from £1.79, and Washington tree, 7.5ft, £379.99, available from Wyevale

BIG, small, real or fake, it would be tree-son not to create a festive focal point worthy of a gold star. Here we share three key looks for this winter. . .

TRULY TRADITIONAL

Red and green is the ultimate festive look, and has a timeless appeal which can be interpreted in a retro way, or given a dash of kitsch. "This is an absolute classic look with red particularly strong this year and not only in decorations - there are also red berry lights," says Roman. "There's a lovely nostalgic feel to this style of decoration, which is seen in red candy cane and Santa stocking decorations. "This season, we're seeing much more emphasis on the texture and finishes of baubles - incorporating matt with shiny; shiny with glitter; or those which are ribbed. "Many have an 'added extra', such as a tiny charm attached to the top, or a ribbon with beading. "People could embellish their own baubles, by simply sourcing charms, stickers or diamante glitter from craft stores, or use a glitter pen to personalise them with names or messages. Add to the red effect by pegging cards to red ribbon, which can be hung from banisters, curtain or picture rails. You can even add red bows to a wreath too."

by Gabrielle Fagan

DECOR TIP: For a luxury look, dress your tree from the back to the front, hanging up to four baubles all along each branch, depending on their length. Place darker coloured baubles at the back (nearer to the trunk) and brighter shades nearer to the branch tip, to give the illusion of depth. Add to the richness with a string of Red Berry Lights, £24.99, and a battery operated Tree Topper, £9.99, Dobbies Garden Centres, which also have a selection of artificial and real trees. **TREE-MENDOUS TREATS:** A luxuriant green 7.5ft artificial Washington tree, £379.99; decorations from £1.79 each, and a Luxury Berry & Pine Garland, £29.99, from Wyevale Garden Centres. Debenhams has plenty of red decorations to choose from, including a Pack Of Four Red Spotty Christmas Baubles, £12, or Set Of 16 Red Assorted Christmas Baubles, £6. Embrace a yesteryear look with Father Christmas Tin Decorations, £3.99 each, The Oak Room. Similarly, John Lewis has a Glass Telephone Box Decoration, £5, and a Bombki Large Post Box or London Bus Glass Hanging Decorations, £30 each. A Red & White Wooden Houses Advent Calendar, reduced to £20 from £40, also from John Lewis, would be a perfect finishing touch.

WOODLAND WAY

Make a tree come alive with woodland creatures, for a look which will delight young and old alike. "This is a cosy, comforting look featuring all the British wildlife characters. "Owls are currently the most popular, along with squirrels, foxes, hedgehogs and stags," says Roman. "Woodland motifs have featured strongly in decor for a while now, and the reddish brown shades of the squirrels and foxes key into the trend for copper tones in decor, so it's not surprising that they're popular for the tree. "Of course, tiny creatures will look perfectly at home on the branches and evoke a cosy, rustic feel. Stand a tree in an old barrel or a wicker tree hamper to complement that look." **DECOR TIP:** Bring in nature by making your own simple hanging decorations. Decorate a tree branch by spray-painting and decorating with tinsel and baubles, to hang on a wall or display on a mantel. Spray pine cones or leaves with copper paint. Champagne Pine Cones Decorations, £6.99 for a set, Dobbies. Pack presents into a Hessian Christmas Santa Sack And Name Tag, £6.99, Not On The High Street. **TREE-MENDOUS TREATS:** A Linea 6ft Emerald Tree, currently reduced to £100 from £200, has an appropriately bushy-branched natural look. Alternatively, their Les Deux

WHITE MAGIC

This look captures the atmosphere of a winter wood. "This is a magical, winter wonderland effect, which - because of its neutral colour palette - works with any decor and is hugely popular," says Roman. "Lightly flocked artificial trees with twinkling pre-lit white lights are perfect for this, and then all you need is a collection white or silver baubles - the 'less is more' rule definitely applies to this style. If pure white is too cool for your taste, warm up the effect with a few gold baubles.

"This metallic finish is enjoying a revival and will feature very strongly in collections next Christmas too. For a finishing touch, make snowballs by simply rolling white or silver strands of tinsel into a ball, and pop them in between branches." **DECOR TIP:** If you're adding strings of lights to a tree and want to check to see if they're evenly placed, turn them on and look at them from the other side of the room by squinting through half-closed eyes. Neon signs are bang-on-trend this season and John Lewis' White Noel Battery Operated Sign, £20, would look brilliant near a tree or on a mantel. Alternatively, The Handpicked Collection has illuminated letters spelling out 'JOY'; Joy Light, £49.95. **TREE-MENDOUS TREATS:** A 2.2m Cranmere Pre-lit Christmas Tree, with 400 LED lights, from £299.99, Dobbies. House of Fraser's Linea 6ft Pre Lit Flocked Whistler Tree is just as handsome and is currently reduced from £230 to £115. For a stylish contemporary effect, John Lewis has a 4ft Pre-lit Birch Cluster, a chic arrangement of trees on a stand, £100 (re-stocked mid-December). Glamour and sparkle combine in Swarovski Christmas Baubles, £45 for set of four, and for a Narnia effect, a Snowdrift Acrylic Glitter Stag, £4, both John Lewis. The Matrioskas Ornaments, a set of three striking white and gold porcelain dolls, £140, Lladro, are an unusual collector's set.



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Christmas Eve

BBC 1



Lee Mack features in the Christmas special of Not Going Out, on at 10.45pm

6.00 Breakfast Headlines and business news. **9.00 David Suchet: In the Footsteps of St Paul** Part two of two. How Paul brought Christianity to the Mediterranean world. (R) **10.00 On Angel Wings** (R) **10.30 FILM: The Santa Clause** (1994) Fantasy comedy, starring Tim Allen. **12.00 Bargain Hunt** Four teams test their antiques knowledge in Corby, Northamptonshire. (R) **1.00 BBC News at One; Weather 1.10 Midlands Today; Weather 1.20 Snow Chick: A Penguin's Tale** Following the first months in the life of an emperor penguin. (R) **2.20 FILM: A Christmas Carol** (2009) Animated fantasy based on Charles Dickens' novel, featuring Jim Carrey and Gary Oldman. **2.45**

BBC 2



Natalie Dormer stars in The Scandalous Lady W, on at 10.00pm

6.20 Homes Under the Hammer A cottage in Cornwall and a house in south London. (R) **7.20 James Martin - Home Comforts at Christmas** (R) **8.05 Sign Zone: This Wild Life** (R) **8.35 Sign Zone: Great British Menu** (R) **9.05 FILM: Bedknobs and Broomsticks** (1971) Disney musical fantasy, starring Angela Lansbury. **11.00 The Hairy Bikers' Northern Exposure** (R) **12.00 Natural World** Gentoo penguins raising chicks in Port Lockroy in the Antarctic. (R) **1.00 FILM: Sister Act 2: Back in the Habit** (1993) Comedy sequel, starring Whoopi Goldberg. **2.45 Perry and Croft: Made in Britain** How the duo's comedies each encapsulated the end of an era. (R)

ITV



Keith Lemon presents Through the Christmas Keyhole, on at 9.45pm

6.00 CITV: Dino Dan. (R) **6.15 Dino Dan** (R) **6.25 Sooty** (R) **6.40 Super 4** Fourchescac tries to make a love potion for the Dark Baron. (R) **7.00 Good Morning Britain** News, current affairs and lifestyle features. **8.30 Lorraine** Entertainment and fashion news. **9.25 Elf: Buddy's Musical Christmas** Stop-motion animated adventure based on the film Elf. (R) **10.25 Pick Me!** Game show featuring lively, loud and energetic players. (R) **11.25 FILM: Back to the Future Part II** (1989) Sci-fi comedy sequel, starring Michael J. Fox. **1.30 1.30 ITV Lunchtime News; Weather. 1.45 FILM: New Soldiers** (1998) Children's adventure, with Kirsten Dunst, Denis Leary and Gregory Smith. **2.45**

Ch4



Christmas displays, My Crazy Christmas Lights, on at 8.00pm

6.15 Small Animal Hospital John Barrowman visits a centre for rescued rabbits. **7.00 The Big Bang Theory** (R) **7.20 The Big Bang Theory** (R) **7.40 The Snowman** (R) **8.05 Father Christmas** (R) **8.35 The Simpsons** (R) **9.10 FILM: Animals United** (2010) Animated comedy with the voices of James Corden and Stephen Fry. **10.55 FILM: Horton Hears a Who!** (2008) Animated comedy, featuring the voice of Jim Carrey. **11.23 FILM: Stuart Little** (1999) Comedy adventure, with the voice of Michael J. Fox. **1.30 Channel 4 News** Including sport and weather. **2.15 FILM: It's a Wonderful Life** (1946) Fantasy drama, starring James Stewart, Donna Reed, Lionel Barrymore. (b/w) **2.45**

Ch5



Festive cheer in Christmas Makes You Laugh Out Loud, on at 7.00pm

6.00 Milkshake! **9.30 The Real Face of Santa Claus** Documentary piecing together historical clues about St Nicholas, an early Christian bishop who lived in Turkey, while forensic experts build a reconstruction of his likeness. **10.30 FILM: Gone with the Wind** (1939) A plantation heiress has a tumultuous relationship with a roguish Southern gentleman during the American Civil War. Epic romantic drama, starring Vivien Leigh and Clark Gable. **11.25 FILM: The Dam Busters** (1954) An engineer designs an ingenious bouncing bomb to destroy major dams in Germany's industrial heartland. Fact-based Second World War drama, with Michael Redgrave. (b/w) **2.45**

Early View

3.50 Finding Nemo (2003) **4.55 Harry Hill in Professor Branestawm Returns**

6.20 BBC News

6.30 Midlands Today; Weather

6.40 Celebrity Mastermind

7.10 Pointless Celebrities Christmas Special Featuring Jeffrey Holland and Su Pollard, Alison Hammond and Robin Windsor, and Colin Baker and Louise Jameson.

8.00 Would I Lie to You? At Christmas Rob Brydon presents a festive special of the comedy game, with Bill Bailey, Ruth Jones, Jo Brand and Kelly Holmes joining team captains David Mitchell and Lee Mack.

8.30 EastEnders Stacey goes into labour during the nativity play. Ronnie is forced to choose a side between Vincent and Phil, and Sharon drops a bombshell that threatens to tear the Beales apart.

9.05 Peter Kay: 20 Years of Funny A celebration of the Bolton comedian's two decades in the business, going back to his early days before stardom, and hearing from friends and colleagues about what makes him tick.

10.05 Williams and Friend Sketch show, starring David Williams and Joanna Lumley.

10.45 Not Going Out On Christmas Eve, Lee and Lucy - who is three days overdue with their first baby - find themselves mistakenly caught up in a robbery at a local department store.

11.30 BBC News; Weather.

11.45 Midnight Mass from St George's Cathedral, Southwark Live service from south London, led by the Archbishop of Southwark, the Most Rev Peter Smith, with prayers to reflect the cathedral's international congregation.

1.00 FILM: Serendipity (2001) **2.25 Weather for the Week Ahead** **2.30 BBC News**

3.15 The Snow Wolf Family and Me (R)

4.15 The Snow Wolf Family and Me (R)

5.15 Carols from King's

6.30 To the Manor Born (R)

7.00 Dad's Army Mainwaring finds himself bidding against Pike for an orange at a fundraising bazaar, but the private reveals a stubborn streak that costs the captain dear. (R)

7.30 Christmas University Challenge Graduates from Exeter University and Magdalen College, Oxford, compete, with wildlife presenter Nick Baker and documentary-maker Louis Theroux among the contestants.

8.00 MasterChef: The Professionals The three finalists have three hours to cook a starter, a main course and a dessert, before one of them is crowned Professional MasterChef Champion 2015. Last in the series.

9.00 The Great History Quiz: The Tudors Kirsty Young asks the questions in this quiz which sees two teams of historians, captained by Lucy Worsley and Dan Snow, demonstrate their knowledge on all aspects of Tudor life.

10.00 The Scandalous Lady W Fact-based period drama about an 18th-century noblewoman who found herself at the centre of a public scandal after eloping with her husband's best friend. Natalie Dormer stars. (R)

11.30 Dial M for Murder (1954) A tennis player's plan to arrange the death of his socialite wife goes wrong when she kills her would-be assassin. Alfred Hitchcock's thriller, with Ray Milland and Grace Kelly. **2.45**

1.10 Simply Nigella: Christmas Special (R) **2.10 Christmas Shopping Fever 2015** John Lewis and the Retail Race (R) **3.10 James Martin - Home Comforts at Christmas** (R)

3.50 National Lampoon's Christmas Vacation (1989) Comedy, starring Chevy Chase. **4.55**

5.40 All Star Mr & Mrs With Martine McCutcheon, Harry Redknapp and Gwyneth Strong. (R)

6.45 ITV Evening News; Weather.

7.00 Emmerdale Belle sees Zak and Joanie kissing and becomes determined to make her pay, while the warehouse robbery is on the news and Aaron's picture is in the paper.

8.00 Coronation Street Fiz tells Tyrone that Hope might not be allowed home for Christmas and Lapland might have to wait. Meanwhile, Tracy confides in Todd that she thinks Robert is planning to propose.

8.30 The Abba Christmas Party Paddy McGuinness presents as music and TV stars sing Abba hits, featuring performances by Susan Boyle, Alexandra Burke, Shayne Ward and Catherine Tyldesley and Scouting for Girls.

9.45 Through the Christmas Keyhole Keith Lemon has a festive rummage through the homes of three celebrities, challenging Stephen Mulhern, Claudia Winkleman and Jimmy Carr to guess their identities. Last in the series.

10.45 ITV News Including Regional News and ITV Weather. **2.45**

11.00 Christmas Carols on ITV Aled Jones joins the congregation of St Elisabeth's Church in Reddish, Stockport, for their Christmas Eve carol service, with performances by Collabro and soul singer Toni Green.

12.00 FILM: Bill & Ted's Excellent Adventure (1989) Time-travel comedy, starring Keanu Reeves and Alex Winter. **1.40 Murder, She Wrote** (R) **2.30 The Jeremy Kyle Show USA** (R) **3.15 ITV Nightscreen** Text-based information service. **5.05 The Jeremy Kyle Show** (R)

4.55 The Snowman Animated adventure, based on Raymond Briggs' festive tale. (R)

5.25 The Snowman and the Snowdog Animated sequel to classic festive tale The Snowman. (R)

6.00 Hollyoaks When Lockie hears about the explosion, he is suspicious of Cameron and threatens to go to the police. Elsewhere, the police search for Reenie and Lisa reveals her secret.

7.00 Jamie's Night Before Christmas Jamie Oliver presents last-minute tips to help people improve their festive dishes, having surveyed thousands of Brits to find out what they fear most about cooking at Christmas.

8.00 My Crazy Christmas Lights The phenomenon of competitive Christmas displays, where a passion for festive lights has seen neighbours trying to outdo each other for the most elaborate design.

9.00 8 Out of 10: Cats Christmas Special Jimmy Carr hosts another festive edition of the show, with some of the nation's top comedy stars joining team captains Sean Lock and Jon Richardson.

10.00 Rude Tube Christmas Cracker Alex Zane presents 50 festive internet clips that have proved popular around the world, including a turkey with a boob job and an inventive Christmas tree decoration-remover.

11.00 Gogglebox Capturing the households' instant reactions to what they are watching on TV from the comfort of their own sofas. (R)

12.00 The Inbetweeners (R) **12.35 The Inbetweeners** (R) **1.05 The Inbetweeners** (R) **1.30 The Inbetweeners** (R) **2.00 Man Down** Christmas Special (R) **2.30 Man Down** (R) **2.55 Man Down** (R) **3.25 Embarrassing Bodies** (R) **4.20 Benchmark** **5.10 Kirstie's Handmade Treasures** (R) **5.30 Famous Fred** (R)

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12.30 FILM: Scrooge - A Christmas Carol (1951) (b/w) **2.15 SuperCasino** **4.00 Michaela's Wild Challenge** (R) **4.25 Divine Designs** (R) **4.45 House Doctor** (R) **5.10 House Doctor** (R) **5.35 House Doctor** (R)

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Christmas Day

BBC 1



Strictly Come Dancing Christmas Special 2015, on at 6.15pm

6.00 Breakfast Headlines and business news. **9.00 Shrek the Halls** (R) **9.20 Clangers** **9.35 Danger Mouse: The Snowman** Cometh 10,000 Christmas Day Service Live from Bath Abbey A service led by the Rev Edward Mason and the Rev Claire Robson. **11.00 FILM: The Santa Clause 3: The Escape Clause** (2006) Christmas fantasy comedy sequel, starring Tim Allen. **★ ★ ★ 12.25 FILM: Madagascar 3: Europe's Most Wanted** (2012) Animated comedy, with the voices of Ben Stiller and Chris Rock. **★ ★ ★ 1.50 BBC News; Weather.** **2.00 Top of the Pops Christmas** Featuring performances by Little Mix, Coldplay, Jess Glynne and Ellie Goulding.

BBC 2



Taking a personal journey, Darcey's Ballet Heroes, on at 8.50pm

6.00 FILM: The Road to El Dorado (2000) Animated adventure, with the voices of Kenneth Branagh and Kevin Kline. **★ ★ ★ 7.20 Galapagos – Islands of Change: Natural World** (R) **8.20 FILM: Herbie Rides Again** (1974) Disney comedy sequel, starring Helen Hayes. **★ ★ ★ 9.45 FILM: The Cat in the Hat** (2003) Comedy fantasy, starring Mike Myers. **★ ★ 11.00 Carols from King's** (R) **12.15 Climbed Every Mountain – The Story Behind The Sound of Music** The true story behind the real Von Trapp family, with Sue Perkins. **(R) 1.15 The Good Life** Tom ponders the future. **(R) 1.45 FILM: Frankenweenie** (2012) Premiere. Animated fantasy, with the voice of Charlie Tahan. (b/w) **★ ★ ★**

ITV



Peter Wilkinson features, Cameraman to the Queen, on at 3.10pm

6.00 CITV: Dino Dan. (R) **6.10 Dino Dan** (R) **6.25 Sooty** (R) **6.40 Sooty** (R) **6.50 Oddbods** (R) **7.00 Dino Dan** (R) **7.15 Horrid Henry** (R) **7.30 Horrid Henry** (R) **7.45 Christmas: Chowder** Chowder worries he will not get the gift that he wants. (R) **8.10 Almost Naked Animals** (R) **8.25 Weekend at Christmas** With Laura Fraser, James Morrison and Leona Lewis. **9.25 FILM: Santa Claus: The Movie** (1985) Family fantasy adventure, starring Dudley Moore. **★ ★ 11.30 FILM: Happy Feet** (2006) Animated adventure, with the voices of Elijah Wood and Robin Williams. **★ ★ ★ 1.35 Text Santa: One More Time** Choice moments from the recent TV charity appeal. **2.45 ITV Lunchtime News; Weather.**

Ch4



Children share their views, Gogglesprogs, on at 8.00pm

6.45 Prep & Landing (R) **7.05 Prep & Landing: Naughty v Nice** (R) **7.30 The Bear** (R) **8.00 FILM: A Turtle's Tale: Sammy's Adventures** (2010) **★ ★ ★ 9.40 The Simpsons** (R) **10.10 The Simpsons** (R) **10.40 The Simpsons** (R) **11.15 Ice Age: A Mammoth Christmas** (R) **11.40 Toy Story Toons 12.10 Father Christmas** Seasonal animation based on Raymond Briggs' book. (R) **12.40 The Snowman** Animated adventure, based on Raymond Briggs' festive tale. (R) **1.15 The Snowman and the Snowdog** Animated sequel to classic festive tale The Snowman. (R) **1.45 FILM: The Muppet Christmas Carol** (1992) Comedy, with Michael Caine and Steven Mackintosh alongside the puppet characters. **★ ★ ★**

Ch5



Sinatra 100: An All-Star Grammy Concert, on at 11.05pm

6.00 Milkshake! 9.50 Andre Rieu's Christmas Spectacular A seasonal concert by the Dutch violinist and his Johann Strauss Orchestra, featuring performances of O Come All Ye Faithful, Silent Night, Jingle Bells and White Christmas. (R) **10.50 FILM: Scrooged** (1970) A miserly man is taught the error of his ways by a host of spectral visitors. Musical adaptation of Charles Dickens' A Christmas Carol, starring Albert Finney and Alec Guinness. **★ ★ ★ 1.05 FILM: Seven Brides for Seven Brothers** (1954) A cowboy decides to get married, prompting his six hellraising brothers to kidnap brides for themselves. Stanley Donen's musical Western, starring Howard Keel and Jane Powell. **★ ★ ★**

Early View

Prime Time

Late View

3.00 The Queen's Christmas Broadcast 2015

3.10 Brave (2012) Premiere. Animated fantasy, with the voice of Kelly Macdonald. **★ ★ ★**

4.35 BBC News; Weather.

4.45 Stick Man

5.15 Doctor Who

6.15 Strictly Come Dancing Christmas Special 2015 Six previous contestants compete for the Silver Star trophy.

7.30 Call the Midwife As Poplar readies itself for Christmas 1960, a visit from a BBC film crew promises to make it a festive holiday to remember. However, it's a difficult time for grieving mother Iris.

8.45 EastEnders Ian's hopes of a perfect Christmas fall apart when the Beales and Mitchells end up arguing. Stacey receives an unexpected visitor and Dean surprises Roxy with an engagement ring.

9.45 Mrs Brown's Boys Christmas Special The dotting mother's wish to have a safe and peaceful Christmas at home is frustrated at every turn. The first of two festive instalments, written by and starring Brendan O'Carroll.

10.25 Michael McIntyre's Big Christmas Show From the Theatre Royal in Drury Lane, London, the host welcomes performers including Dara O Briain, Dame Edna Everage, Paul Zerdin, Ellie Goulding and Tom Jones to the stage.

11.25 BBC News; Weather.

11.40 Love Came Down at Christmas At St Alban's Church in Bristol, the Exultate Singers perform David Ogden's new choral setting of the Christina Rossetti poem, and actor Alex Jennings reads from the Gospel of John; National Lottery Update

11.45 Comedy Bloopers **12.15 Not Going Out** (R) **1.00 FILM: Surviving Christmas** (2004) **★ 2.25 Weather for the Week Ahead** **2.30 BBC News**

3.05 Tim Rice – A Life in Song (R)

4.35 Romeo & Juliet (2013) With Douglas Booth. **★ ★**

6.20 Sign Zone: The Queen's Christmas Broadcast 2015 (R)

6.30 World's Sneakiest Animals

7.30 Dad's Army Pompous Captain Mainwaring proves he is a softie at heart by organising a Christmas treat for the struggling senior citizens of Walmington-on-Sea. (R)

8.00 The Two Ronnies: Christmas Show Ronnie Barker and Ronnie Corbett in a special Christmas show of sketches, jokes and songs, with guests Peter Wyngarde and Patrick Troughton. Plus, music by Elaine Page. (R)

8.50 Darcey's Ballet Heroes Former ballet dancer-turned-Strictly Come Dancing judge Darcey Bussell undertakes a very personal journey to meet the heroes and dancers who transformed male ballet.

9.50 QI Stephen Fry conjures up some seasonal merriment with Jenny Eclair, Johnny Vegas and Bill Bailey supplementing the efforts of regular panellist Alan Davies.

10.20 We're Doomed! The Dad's Army Story Comedy drama about how Jimmy Perry and David Croft overcame BBC management scepticism and focus groups to get the sitcom Dad's Army on air. Starring Paul Ritter and Richard Dormer. (R)

11.20 Gambit (2012) A put-upon art expert plans revenge on a millionaire by tricking him into buying a fake Monet painting. Comedy remake, starring Colin Firth, Cameron Diaz and Alan Rickman. **★ ★**

12.40 FILM: The Trouble with Harry (1955) Hitchcock's black comedy, with Edmund Gwenn, John Forsyth and Shirley MacLaine. **★ ★ ★ ★ 2.20 This Is BBC Two**

3.00 The Queen Her Majesty's annual address.

3.10 Cameraman to the Queen Royal cameraman Peter Wilkinson follows the queen over the course of one year.

4.10 Countrywise Winter Wonderland Exploring what makes this time of year special for Britain's countryside.

5.00 Paul O'Grady: For the Love of Dogs at Christmas The broadcaster spreads festive cheer at Battersea Dogs & Cats Home in London.

6.00 ITV Evening News; Weather.

6.15 You've Been Framed! With Bells On Camcorder clips with a festive theme, including a pensioner throwing fireworks at carol singers, a Christmas fairy going up in flames, and a smartphone found inside a turkey.

6.45 Emmerdale Pollard finally leaves the house, and has an experience that forces him to confront his past, present and future. Coronation Street's Liz Dawn (Vera Duckworth) guest stars.

7.45 Coronation Street Robert is about to propose to Tracy, but first he asks her a question that leaves her reeling. Meanwhile, Sinead is thrilled when she gets an engagement ring of her own.

8.45 Downton Abbey – The Finale Mary endeavours to build bridges, but Edith's secret continues to pose a threat as Julian Fellowes bids farewell to the Crawleys with one last festive special.

10.45 Our Cilla A celebration of Cilla Black by the people who knew her best, including famous faces such as Ringo Starr, Cliff Richard, Christopher Biggins and Paul O'Grady.

11.45 ITV News; Weather. **12.00 FILM: Dr No** (1962) **★ ★ ★ ★ 1.50 Murder, She Wrote** (R) **2.45 The Jeremy Kyle Show USA** (R) **3.25 ITV Nightscreen**

3.25 Channel 4 News Including sport and weather.

3.35 Alternative Christmas Message Channel 4's alternative to the Queen's Christmas Day broadcast.

3.45 Scrooged (1988) Christmas comedy, starring Bill Murray. **★ ★ ★**

5.45 Home Alone 2: Lost in New York (1992) Comedy sequel, starring Macaulay Culkin. **★ ★ ★**

8.00 Gogglesprogs The nation's children share their opinions on the best and worst of 2015's TV, from the cakes on The Great British Bake off, to big news stories like the general election.

9.00 Alan Carr: Chatty Man Christmas Special The host is joined by Catherine Tate's Nan, Keith Lemon, Lorraine Kelly, Emma Willis and Marvin Humes. Plus, music by Little Mix and One Direction. Last in the series.

11.00 8 Out of 10: Cats Christmas Special A number of familiar faces join host Jimmy Carr and team captains Sean Lock and Jon Richardson as they cast their eyes over some of the more memorable stories of 2015.

12.05 Very British Problems at Christmas A one-off return for the show. This time famous faces, including David Tennant, James Corden, Roshan Ranganathan, Catherine Tate and Danny Dyer, grumble about the festive season.

(R) 1.05 FILM: Ferris Bueller's Day Off (1986) A cocky teenager plays truant from school and spends the day dragging his friends into all manner of adventures in the big city. Comedy, starring Matthew Broderick and Mia Sara. **★ ★ ★ ★**

2.50 Friday Night Dinner Adam finally brings a girl home for dinner. **(R) 3.15 Gadget Man** Richard Ayoade takes on the worst of the British weather. **(R) 3.40 Gadget Man** Richard Ayoade turns his attention to public transport. **(R) 4.10 Benchmark** Game show, hosted by Paddy McGuinness. **4.55 Grand Designs Australia** (R) **5.50 How I Met Your Mother** (R)

3.10 The Wizard of Oz (1939) Musical fantasy, starring Judy Garland. **★ ★ ★**

5.10 Michael Buble's Christmas 2015 Festive special, with guest appearances by Celine Dion, Tori Kelly and Sharon Jones. (R)

6.05 Britain's Favourite Christmas Songs A countdown of songs guaranteed to make any Christmas party go with a swing, including classics by the Jackson 5, Jona Lewie, Band Aid, the Pogues and Kirsty MacColl, and Slade. (R)

8.50 Chas & Dave's Xmas Knees Up! Festive entertainment from 1982, with guests including Eric Clapton, Jimmy Cricket, Jim Davidson, Albert Lee and Lennie Peters joining the Cockney duo. (R)

9.40 Britain's Favourite Abba Songs A countdown of the Swedish pop group's 20 most popular songs, with celebrity fans including Jane McDonald and Liz McClarnon introducing their favourite clips. (R)

11.05 Sinatra 100: An All-Star Grammy Concert Celebration of the 100th anniversary of the singer's birth, featuring performances of some of his best-known songs by Tony Bennett, Garth Brooks, Usher and Alicia Keys.

1.25 Abba: Live in Concert The Swedish band in concert during their six-night residence at London's Wembley Arena in November 1979, featuring hits including Voulez-Vous, Dancing Queen and Waterloo. **(R) 2.35 SuperCasino** Viewers get the chance to take part in live interactive gaming, with a mix of roulette-wheel spins and lively chat from the presenting team. **4.00 Christmas with Britain's Biggest Family** The problems posed by the festive season to large families. (R) **4.45 House Doctor** A flat in Kensal Green, west London. **(R) 5.10 House Doctor** A property in Spennymoor, Co Durham. (R) **5.35 House Doctor** (R)

Boxing Day

BBC 1



David Jason stars, Still Open All Hours, on at 8.00pm

6.00 Breakfast A round-up of national and international news, plus sports reports, weather forecasts and arts and entertainment features. Including NewsWatch at 7.45. **10.00 Christmas Saturday Kitchen** With Christopher Biggins, Eric Chavot, Pascal Aussignac and Nadiya Hussain. **11.30 James Martin - Home Comforts at Christmas** Transforming leftovers into simple dishes. (R) **12.15 BBC News: Weather.** **12.25 Football Focus** Dan Walker reviews the week's action. **1.00 Comic Relief 2015: Thanks a Billion!** Lenny Henry revisits comedy highlights from this year's charity event. **2.00 Wallace & Gromit: A Grand Day Out** (R) **2.25 A Grand Night In: The Story of Aardman**

BBC 2



Russell Howard stars, A Gert Lush Christmas, on at 9.00pm

6.00 Race to Super Bowl 50 Action from the week 15 fixtures. (R) **6.50 Flog It!** Making a profit at auction. **7.35 FILM: Tom Thumb (1958)** A miniature boy foils the schemes of a pair of crooks and helps a kind musician find true love. Children's musical fantasy, starring Russ Tamblyn, Terry-Thomas and Peter Sellers. **9.05 FILM: Hotel for Dogs (2009)** Family comedy, starring Emma Roberts. **10.35 Ten Pieces II** The BBC Philharmonic Orchestra and guests perform recitals of 10 classical works. **11.35 FILM: G-Force (2009)** Children's adventure, starring Bill Nighy. **1.00 Attenborough's Big Birds: Natural World (R)** **2.00 Attenborough's Paradise Birds (R)**

ITV



Holly Willoughby presents, Surprise, on at 7.00pm

6.00 CITV: Fort Boyard Ultimate Challenge. (R) **6.25 Pat & Stan (R)** **6.30 Pat & Stan (R)** **6.35 Dino Dan: Trek's Adventures (R)** **6.50 Dino Dan (R)** **7.00 Signed Stories: Share a Story (R)** **7.05 Oddbods (R)** **7.10 Sooty (R)** **7.25 Super 4 (R)** **7.40 Mr Bean: The Animated Series (R)** **7.50 Mr Bean: The Animated Series (R)** **8.00 The Aquabats! Super Show! (R)** **8.30 Thunderbirds Are Go 9.00 The Tom & Jerry Show (R)** **9.15 The Tom & Jerry Show (R)** **9.25 Elf: Buddy's Musical Christmas (R)** **10.25 You've Been Framed! (R)** **10.55 FILM: Back to the Future Part III (1990)** **1.05 ITV News and Weather 12.00 FILM: Jurassic Park (1993)** Action adventure, starring Sam Neill. **1.10 Channel 4 Racing**

Ch4



George Clooney stars, Fantastic Mr Fox, on at 11.25am

6.15 FILM: Ramona and Beezus (2010) Family comedy, starring Joey King. **8.00 The Morning Line** Nick Luck and guests are at Kempton Park to preview today's races. **9.00 The Big Bang Theory** Leonard fails to get Sheldon into the Christmas mood. (R) **9.30 The Big Bang Theory** The gang reflects on how Sheldon has changed their lives. (R) **10.00 The Big Bang Theory (R)** **10.25 The Simpsons (R)** **10.55 The Simpsons (R)** **11.25 FILM: Fantastic Mr Fox (2009)** A fox gives up stealing chickens in favour of family life, but a new challenge is too tempting. Stop-motion animated adventure, with the voices of George Clooney and Meryl Streep. **1.10 Channel 4 Racing**

Ch5



Festive cheer, Christmas Makes You Laugh Out Loud, on at 7.05pm

6.00 Milkshake! 9.10 The Saturday Show Matt Barbet and Gaby Roslin present the topical show with three celebrity guests, who discuss the week's headlines, as well as viral videos and the latest TV and film releases. **11.10 The Dog Rescuers at Christmas with Alan Davies** Qi regular and comedian Alan Davies throws a party for some of the stars of the series, and award-winning RSPCA officer, Derek Hampson hands out presents to rescue dogs across England and Wales. (R) **12.10 The Secret Life of Marilyn Monroe** Biopic exploring how the actress and sex symbol managed to hide her most intimate secrets from the press, even at the height of her fame. Starring Kelli Garner and Susan Sarandon.

Early View

Prime Time

Late View

3.25 Puss in Boots (2011) **4.45 The Croods (2013)** **6.10 Shaun the Sheep: The Farmer's Llamas** **6.40 BBC News** **6.50 Midlands Today: Weather** **7.00 Dickensian** New series. Period drama re-imagining the works of Charles Dickens as inter-connected tales, beginning as ruthless debt collector Jacob Marley makes himself an enemy. **7.30 EastEnders** Kat tells Martin that Alfie is still in Spain - unaware he is not far behind her - and Dean is angry with Shirley after she ruins his plans for Christmas dinner. **8.00 Still Open All Hours** Granville and Gastric try to get Madge into the festive spirit by organising a cosy drinks party, while a bargain Christmas tree causes problems. **8.30 Dickensian** Christmas Day arrives and Inspector Bucket begins his investigation into Jacob Marley's murder, and at Satis House, Amelia Havisham's mysterious rescuer makes another appearance. **9.00 And Then There Were None** New series. Ten strangers are stranded on a remote island, and learn there may be a killer in their midst. Period mystery, starring Anna Maxwell Martin. Continues tomorrow. **10.00 BBC News: Weather.** **10.20 The National Lottery Live** Ore Oduba with the all-important Lotto and Thunderball draws. **10.30 Match of the Day** Gary Lineker presents highlights of the full programme of Premier League games, including Chelsea v Watford, Manchester City v Sunderland and Stoke City v Manchester United. National Lottery Update. **12.05 FILM: The Guardian (2006)** **1.15 Weather for the Week Ahead 2.20 BBC News**

3.00 Bedtime Stories (2008) Fantasy comedy, starring Adam Sandler. **4.30 Final Score** A round-up of this afternoon's football results. **5.30 Don't Panic! The Dad's Army Story (R)** **6.20 We're Doomed!: The Dad's Army Story (R)** **7.20 Dad's Army** Frazer is unable to hide his delight when Captain Mainwaring's disreputable brother crashlands a sherry party for local dignitaries. Classic comedy, starring Arthur Lowe. (R) **8.00 Top Gear: From A to Z** John Bishop narrates the first of two programmes celebrating the highlights of the Jeremy Clarkson, James May and Richard Hammond era, via an alphabetical list. **9.00 A Gert Lush Christmas** Comedian Russell Howard's debut comedy drama. Dan Colman is about to introduce the woman of his dreams to his crazy but adorable family at Christmas, but it may not go to plan. **10.00 Abz on the Christmas Farm** Abz Love and his girlfriend Vicky Fallon spend Christmas reflecting on the successes and failures of their year running a smallholder farm in Wales. **10.30 Backchat End of Year Show 2015** Jack Whitehall and his father Michael review the past 12 months, picking apart some of the highs and lows of 2015 in an end-of-year special. **11.15 Kinky Boots (2005)** A man inherits a struggling shoe factory and finds salvation for his business in a drag artist's need for custom footwear. Comedy drama, starring Chiwetel Ejiofor and Joel Edgerton. **1.00 FILM: Marnie (1964)** **3.05 Sign Zone: Imagine - The Ecstasy of Wilko Johnson (R)** **4.40 This Is BBC Two**

3.40 Midsomer Murders A man's apparent suicide shocks the village of Morton Fendle - but things take a sinister turn when Barnaby and Jones discover the victim was not alone when he died. (R) **5.40 ITV News and Weather** **6.00 The Nation's Favourite Disney Song** **7.00 Surprise Surprise** Holly Willoughby delivers Christmas presents to members of the public, including an injured soldier preparing to row across the Atlantic and a young heart transplant survivor. **8.00 Peter & Wendy** Lucy Rose, a 12-year-old girl with a serious heart condition, is admitted to St Ormond Street Hospital to await treatment. On the night before her operation, Lucy reads JM Barrie's tale of Peter Pan to her fellow patients, and as she eventually drifts off to sleep, her dreaming mind conjures up the magical world of Neverland. **10.05 The Jonathan Ross Show Christmas Special** The host presents a Boxing Day special in which he dispenses with his no-holds-barred questions, and instead invites guests to take part in light-hearted games. **11.10 ITV News** Including Regional News and ITV Weather. **11.25 From Russia with Love (1963)** James Bond is assigned to steal a top-secret Soviet decoding machine - but the mission is a trap set by crime syndicate Spectre. Spy thriller, with Sean Connery and Robert Shaw. **1.25 Jackpot247** Viewers get the chance to participate in live interactive gaming from the comfort of their sofas, with a mix of roulette-wheel spins and lively chat from the presenting team. **3.00 Murder, She Wrote** Cabot Cove becomes the scene of deadly competition when an eccentric recluse dies, and Jessica is given the dubious honour of executing the woman's will. (R)

3.30 Home Alone 3 (1997) Comedy sequel, starring Alex D Linz. **4.45 News** Including sport and weather. **5.35 The Secret Life of Children at Christmas** The children are reunited to perform their own nativity play. (R) **6.30 Britain's Favourite Children's Books with David Walliams** The comedy actor counts down through a list of the nation's most beloved children's books, while other celebrity fans read extracts from the selected tales. **8.00 Inside Lego at Christmas** Cameras return to the Lego factory ahead of Christmas to discover how staff prepare for the festive season, which accounts for more than half of the firm's annual sales. **9.00 The Big Fat Quiz of the Year 2015** Rob Brydon, Sue Perkins, David Mitchell, Claudia Winkleman, Greg Davies and Jo Brand reveal whether they have their fingers on the pulse of modern life in the annual quiz. **11.05 Rude Tube Christmas Cracker** Alex Zane presents 50 festive internet clips that have proved popular around the world, including a turkey with a boob job and an inventive Christmas tree decoration-remover. (R) **12.10 Alan Carr: Chatty Man Christmas Special** The host is joined by Catherine Tate's Nan, Keith Lemon, Lorraine Kelly, Emma Willis and Marvin Humes. Plus, music by Little Mix and One Direction. Last in the series. (R) **2.05 Rude Tube** Alex Zane counts down the Top 50 online videos devoted to love and marriage. **3.00 Hollyoaks Omnibus** Ziggy and Celine find Ste sleeping outside after another binge and rush him to hospital, while Reenie receives a invitation to Derek's will reading. (R) **5.10 Location, Location, Location** Two families who were selling up to fund a business. (R)

3.15 Diana (2013) Premiere. Fact-based drama, starring Naomi Watts and Naveen Andrews. **5.05 One Chance (2013)** Premiere. Fact-based comedy drama, starring James Corden. **7.05 Christmas Makes You Laugh Out Loud** Iain Lee presents Christmas-themed videos that have taken the internet by storm in a seasonal special showcasing hilarious online clips with a festive twist. (R) **8.05 Chas & Dave's Xmas Knees Up!** Festive entertainment from 1982, which sees the Cockney duo joined by celebrity guests Eric Clapton, Jimmy Cricket, Jim Davidson, Albert Lee and Lennie Peters. (R) **9.00 Football League Tonight: Boxing Day Special** Kelly Cates and George Riley present extended highlights of the packed Boxing Day fixture list, including Hull City v Burnley and Derby County v Fulham in the Championship. **10.30 Most Shocking Christmas TV Moments** A merry romp through the most inappropriate, outrageous and appallingly atrocious Christmas television turkeys of all time, featuring contributions from some of those involved. **12.30 Can't Pay? We'll Take It Away! Christmas Special** The world of debt collection during the festive period. (R) **1.25 SuperCasino** Live interactive gaming. **3.10 Kids' Hospital at Christmas: Revisited** Catching up with the six children who featured in the series. (R) **4.00 Chris Tarrant on the Polar Express** Chris embarks on a 2,000-mile railway trip from Moscow to Arctic Siberia. (R) **4.50 Make It Big** The raffle money goes missing. (R) **5.15 Make It Big** First episode of the reality show following 12 young entrepreneurs. (R) **5.45 Angels of Jarm** (R) **5.50 Angels of Jarm Bindi** is jealous of Jess's new coat. (R)

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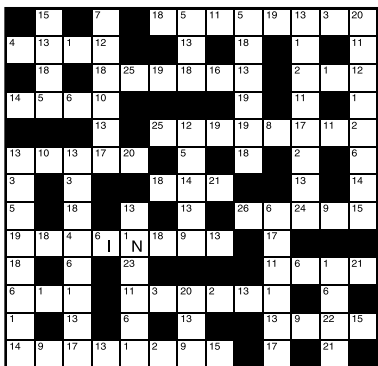
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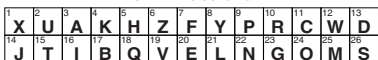
BRAIN GYM No.357

Codeword

Each number in the grid represents a different letter of the alphabet and every letter of the alphabet is used. Use the given letter(s) to the right of the main grid to start you off.



LAST WEEK'S SOLUTION:



Double Crossword

Choose either quick or cryptic clues - both fit the same grid.

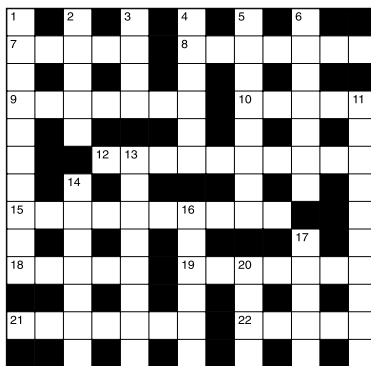
Cryptic Clues:

Across

- Jovial fellow right for cutting (5)
- Ashamed - got rid of a graduate (7)
- Practised player gets well-used set of cards (3,4)
- The chosen beginning of a power source (5)
- Give way and tolerate a team (5,5)
- It's unlikely that one politician can wear a gown (10)
- There will be some on the staff, of course (5)
- Dissipated sea-creature joins the air force (7)
- Grimly holding the back end of the ship? (7)
- It's more pleasant right by French resort (5)

Down

- Pardon graduate getting up to answer (10)
- Vehicles containing 500 pieces for game (5)
- Gamble on article from the Greek alphabet (4)
- Irritate mother animal going up to lair (6)
- Game played at HQ dance (8)
- I re-echo such a greeting (7)
- Be comforted in that place twice (5,5)
- A large number of old-fashioned pronouns also (8)
- Picked out rashly, so to speak? (7)
- Dresses youth leader in tapestry (6)
- Black, sticky stuff suitable for playing games on (5)
- An excellent punishment (4)



Quick Clues:

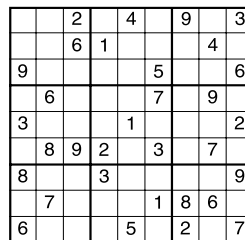
Across

- Drive (5)
- Egg white (7)
- Food (7)
- Drift (5)
- Belligerent (10)
- Generous (4-6)
- Shade (5)
- Nomad (7)
- Yield (7)
- Reject scornfully (5)

Down

- Uneasiness (10)
- Foam (5)
- Too (4)
- Transmit (4,2)
- Impediment (8)
- Sovereign (7)
- Dissatisfaction (10)
- Ignored (8)
- Signification (7)
- Figure (6)
- Compass (5)
- Pant (4)

Sudoku



Fill in the grid below so that every column, every row and each of the 3x3 boxes contains all the digits from 1 to 9.

LAST WEEK'S SOLUTIONS >



LAST WEEK'S CROSSWORD SOLUTIONS: CRYPTIC - Across: 7 Enable; 8 Matter; 10 Outside; 11 Avoid; 12 None; 13 Stole; 17 David; 18 Vote; 22 Least; 23 Outpost; 24 Strife; 25 Cutler; Down: 1 Resound; 2 Casting 3 Plain; 4 Capable; 5 Stood; 6 Bride; 9 Test pilot; 14 Mastiff; 15 Monocle; 16 Letters; 19 Glass; 20 Harry; 21 Stout; QUICK - Across: 7 Return; 8 Quiver; 10 Diction; 11 Forge; 12 Club; 13 Grain; 17 Slide; 18 Gain; 22 Maxim; 23 Explain; 24 Clergy; 25 Joyous; Down: 1 Produce; 2 Stuck-up; 3 Krait; 4 Surfeit; 5 Avert; 6 Greed; 9 Unbridled; 14 Plumage; 15 Paragon; 16 Oneness; 19 Smack; 20 Expel; 21 Spool.

Quiz

- Who was the Leader of the House of Commons from 1976-9?
- In which country is the Athos peninsula?
- Who was the companion of Don Quixote?
- In which two months are the Dog-days?
- To which crop is the Colorado Beetle a serious pest?
- What is the gnu also known as?
- Of what family is the Guinea-Pig a member?
- How many gallons did a kilderkin once represent?
- Which is the brightest of the planets?
- In which country is Innsbruck?

Last week's solutions:

Quiz: 1 Exodus; 2 The Tempest; 3 1965; 4

Klaus Barbie; 5 25; 6 June 6th;

7 Jane Austen; 8 Canada; 9 Czech;

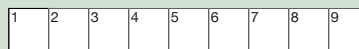
10 Painting.

Niner: SECTIONAL

Niner

Each number from 1 to 9 represents a different letter. Solve the clues and insert the letters in the appropriate squares to discover a word which uses all nine letters.

456298 gives a dance,
1534 gives a movie,
4785699 gives a performance.



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STARMAKERS CHRISTMAS PARTY
BOXING DAY 26/12/2015
THE DISCO DISCIPLES
SUNDAY 27/12/2015
STARMAKERS SUNDAY KARAOKE PARTY NIGHT !!!
MONDAY 28/12/2015
QUIZ & TOP KARAOKE AT THE KNIGHTS QUEST
TUESDAY 29/12/2015
IT'S TUESDAY...ITS KARAOKE WITH PREDATOR
NEW YEARS EVE 31/12/2015
INTO 2016 WITH SIDE BY SIDE
NEW YEARS DAY 01/01/2016
DAZZLER FOLLOWED BY SHANES DISCO
SATURDAY 02/01/2016
GARY BARLOW TRIBUTE WITH TYLER JOHN

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Definitely worth a visit – Spices, Walsall Road, Bridgtown, Cannock



The spacious interior has comfortable seating



Manager Ali, left pictured with Head Chef Anwar at Spices

New restaurant where menu variety was definitely the Spice of life for my family

IT'S always a shame when a long-standing pub shuts down – and these days it happens all too frequently. But sometimes a successful, new venture fills the void. And that is exactly what Spices Restaurant has done in Bridgtown, Cannock. Its former presence as a pub has not been completely forgotten, though. The Bridgtown Tavern – with an ‘e’ unlike the village it stands in – was a popular local, but after its unexpected closure around three years ago, Syed Ali stepped in to turn it into an Indian restaurant. Ali already runs restaurants in Sedgley and Wednesbury but when the Cannock area was

suggested, he was not put off by the plethora of eateries already in the area. “I know there were a lot of restaurants, but that means there are a lot of eaters,” he said. Cleverly, though, while identifying the need to cater for a growing clientele, he has steered clear of the main cluster of restaurants, thus avoiding where his main competition would be. **Beams** Spices lies on a main road through the village, ideal for passing trade but far enough away from the town centre saturation. Some of the pub’s old features remain, though, including the centrepiece bar. It is because of this that the interior doesn’t have that feel of a contemporary diner – and it’s all the better for it. Alterations have been made of course, but

Mark Shipp tucks in the exposed brickwork and beams give it a more homely feeling. Tables are set out to cater for parties of diners, or families, and it is this set up that Ali, as he prefers to be known, prides his operation on. I dined with my family, and truth to be told, it was an evening that money couldn’t buy. We had proper conversations, we could hear ourselves talk. There were other diners, but no-one too loud or boisterous – and, where else could you dine out to a background soundtrack that included Stevie Wonder, The Three Degrees and Simply Red? Not all my cup of tea, but certainly an eclectic mix. Ali and his staff, there are 14 employed in all, took time out to chat to us and check everything was okay, while being fully aware

that other diners needed attention, too. What’s more the food was enjoyed by all four of us. From a menu that featured a seemingly endless list of Spices exclusives and recommended dishes like the khunda, the choice was certainly extensive. **Perfect** Ali spoke highly of his team of chefs, who like to add new lines on a regular basis and welcome comments from customers on favoured or requested dishes. They didn’t let us down here. Now I wouldn’t say a fish dish is my favourite curry, but to quote the legendary philosopher Brian Clough “it’s in the top one.” I was in my element here as I was allowed to try two, the mach palak – pan-fried sea bass fillets in a medium sauce with spinach and potatoes,

complemented by lemon rice and naan bread, and the kanda wala machli, fish cooked in a lemon and coriander sauce. It’s easy to say when being looked after for the purpose of a review that everything was OK. Often little things go wrong or not something is not quite right. It’s human nature. However, this was a night when absolutely everything was perfect. A more pleasant ‘mein host’ you could not wish to meet, in impressive surroundings, with a just-right atmosphere and terrific food. It seems that Ali has it spot-on, and his regular diners – he caters for 70 but that can be extended – are proof of the quality served up. For the record, the better half’s makani bhuna and the children’s tikka masala and chips were well received, too. Spices is open from 5.30 to 11pm between Tuesday and Sunday. Call 01543 502767.

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SQUID, CHORIZO & PRAWNS
cooked in garlic butter.

RED PEPPER SOUP (v)
with crusty white bread.

KOYLA CHICKEN LIVER Pâté
with warm toast, red onion chutney
& salad garnish.

MAINS

GRILLED TANDOORI SEABASS & KING PRAWN LINGUINE
with chorizo, fresh chillies & garlic butter.

RUMP STEAK
topped with pepper sauce
with spring onion mash & vine tomatoes.

CHICKEN BREAST
with creamy mushroom sauce,
new potatoes & sautéed vegetables.

PORK BELLY on MUSTARD MASH
with black pudding, cider & apple sauce
and pork crackling

DESSERTS

STICKY TOFFEE PUDDING
with vanilla Ice cream.

LEMON TART
with vanilla Ice cream.

BANANA SPLIT
with fresh whippy Ice cream.

APPLE PIE
with custard.

A Happy New Year
to all our customers



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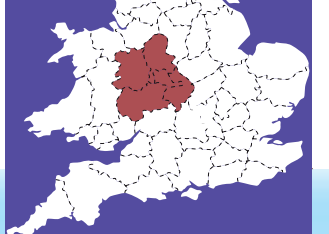
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Women seeking men

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SAMANTHA, 42yrs, seeks gent for festive season, doesn't want to be along again. Age/looks unimportant, GSOH essential. Box: 4140774. **Text only.**

LYN, 43, divorced very lonely single mum, young looking, slim, attractive, W/LTM similar male for companionship. Age/looks/Status unimportant. Tel: No: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 419855

JANE, young 41, very broadminded seeks chap any age for discreet no strings fun, any age, no time wasters ACA. Tel: No: 0906 515 3011 Box: 409715

SUSANNAH, 48, curvy female, romantic, warm and cuddly, seeks similar kind male for a loving relationship with lots of cuddles and kisses. Looks unimportant. Tel: No: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 417341

MAUREEN, discreet sensual lady, 42yrs seeks daytime fun at her home. ACA. Tel: 0906 515 3015 Box: 405297

LUCY, 32, blonde, tall and slim, looking for a casual fling, nothing serious. Discretion needed and assured. Tel: No: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 420237

SOPHIA young 40yrs, married but bored, seeks discreet adult fun, any area, all calls. Text: 0906 515 3019 Box: 413399

YVONNE, single mum, happy with life, but would like to meet someone to share fun times with. Tel: No: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 420269

KATIE 35yrs, slender well educated brunette seeks no strings mutual pleasure with gent 40+. Must be discreet, married or single. ACA. Tel: 0906 515 3003 Box 419673

JACKIE lonely and looking for male company, 48-65. Need a bit of love and affection? Then I'm your girl. call me. Tel: No: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 418169

DISCREET man wanted by married lady for no strings fun. I'm called Sarah and am 37yrs. Pls call, ACA. Tel: No: 0906 515 3007 Box 418167

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KELLY young attractive vivacious 48yr old lady, loves good food, cosy nights/in, holidays etc. W/LTM male for mutual companionship. Tel: No: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 420195

SARAH, curvaceous brunette, 35, pariah, nature, solvent, OHAC, W/LTM date again, looking for male to take me out. Looks/Age unimportant. Tel: No: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 420207

FELICITY, 38yrs, attractive, petite but shapely lady seeks gent for indoor activities! Age/looks/marital status unimportant but must be discreet and non demanding. Tel: 0906 515 3023 Box 420235

FREYA 24yr old single mum, looking for male for free time frolics, call me if you're interested, it could be fun! Tel: No: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 419851

LISA 38 slim attractive blonde, looking for a man who will appreciate a feminine, fashionable, fun, romantic sensual woman with a mind of her own. Tel: No: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 419839

SARAH 38, slim, nice looking, sensual, tactile, no ties, W/LTM kind, loving male to enjoy affectionate relationship. Any age/looks. Tel: No: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 419821

PAT 66, attractive, N/S, likes reading, nights out, seeks gent for friendship, days out and more. Tel: No: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 418277

LOUISE 35, dark hair, blue eyes, attractive ex air hostess, looking for fun times with older male for romantic nights in and more. Tel: No: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 420043

FRANCES, 45, busty female, loves nights/in, seeking uncomplicated male who can occupy my free time for quality companionship. Tel: No: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 420003

MARY, pretty, friendly, lots of fun, lives in Kidderminster, loves the theatre, opera, ballet, W/LTM a lovely, charming, funny, genuine guy, 30s, to settle down with. Tel: No: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 419883

LOU, 45, lives in Shrewsbury, W/LTM a lady between 42-49 with blue eyes, must be kind, caring and funny to mend my broken heart, someone who likes to curl up on the sofa for cozy nights in. Tel: No: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 419855

LADY Penelope seeks her very own Parker (47-58) to go on a voyage of discovery and romance. Text only to Mailbox no: 4550237

BLACK lady seeks white male over 60, any location, for friendship and love. Text only to Mailbox no: 4256384

68YR old widow, attractive, seeks sincere N/S male, likes reading, meals out and walks. West Midlands. Tel: No: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 414773

JULIA 47, looking for genuine, reasonably attractive male friend, may lead to more. Tel: No: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 419695

REMEMBER: Calls cost £1.55 per minute plus your phone company's access charge. Texts cost £1.50 per message received.

BLUE eyed female, blonde hair, slim, GSOH, loving, caring, understanding, seeking similar male, 55-55. Tel: No: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 416989

AMANDA, 36, tall, slim, busty brunette seeks man, any age, any area, for discreet daytime fun. Tel: No: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 418117

CAROL Ann, sensitive slim brunette very romantic seeks tall handsome male for fun, friendship and lots of TLC. Tel: No: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 419385

KIRSTEN, 36, attractive, blonde and very bored, seeking open-minded decent male for fun/friendship, 40-60yrs. Tel: No: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 419383

VAL 41, pretty, cuddly, flirty, seeks similar fun loving male for an uncomplicated no strings relationship. Age/looks/unimportant. Tel: No: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 418501

MID naughty frolics female looking fun, thrills and discreet meets, give me a call, you won't be disappointed. Any age with own accommodation. Tel: No: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 409105

DIVORCED female, attractive, sensual by nature, OHAC, bored with own company, looking to make life a little more exciting with likeminded man. Tel: No: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 419215

LINDA, 47, brown-eyed blonde, caring, loving and honest, many interests, seeks genuine male to share lovely evenings with. Tel: No: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 417211

JOYCE, affectionate sensitive widow, bit of a romantic, seeks loving male for lots of TLC. Looks unimportant, it's what's in the heart that matters. Tel: No: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 419143

DEBBIE, 29, looking for mature professional fun guy, 40-50 to spend good times with. Call me, you have nothing to lose. Tel: No: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 419075

FEMALE fun brunette, attractive, 26, seeking male for friendship, maybe more. Tel: No: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 416287

CHARLENE, 24, petite curvy young blonde seeks similar cheery, fun loving guy for lots of fun and loving. ACA. Tel: No: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 419597

JOANNA, 36, petite, auburn haired female, lovely figure seeks loving older male for fun nights out and cosy nights in. Maybe more. Tel: No: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 419595

SHARON 32, attractive black single mum of one, very tactile and passionate, W/LTM male 45-65yrs for fun meets. Tel: No: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 419579

MARIE, 43, fun blue-eyed brunette, fit and active, seeks similar male to have a laugh with. Tel: No: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 419417

KAREN 50, widow, likes swimming, horse riding, keep fit, call pigeon shooting, GSOH, N/S, no drinker, seeks male. Tel: No: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 415211

CURVY, farm girl at heart, 32, 5ft 10, single mum, caring, kind, shy, likes walks, cooking W/LTM tactile male farmer for LTR. Text only to Mailbox no: 5067001

FEMALE medium build, blonde hair, 5ft 5ins, seeks male, 50-58, GSOH, loving, caring and understanding. Tel: No: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 415429

WIDOW 50, blonde hair, GSOH, 5ft 5ins, slim, seeks male. Tel: No: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 415767

MARIE, 43, fun blue-eyed brunette, fit and active, seeks similar male to have a laugh with. Tel: No: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 419417

FEMALE 50's, 5ft 5ins, blonde hair, blue eyes, slim, seeks gent with GSOH, loving, caring and understanding. Tel: No: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 415871



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VIRGINIA, outgoing social female, 24, tall slim and attractive, looking for fun times, maybe more. Can accommodate/travel. Tel: No: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 418845

LOOKING for the right chemistry with country loving gent who like me is looking for some extra fun in their life. Tel: No: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 418843

JAN 35yr old blue eyed blonde, outgoing, friendly, W/LTM passionate guy to share good wine, good conversation, flirting and fun times. Tel: No: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 418675

ATTRACTIVE professional lady, widow, 50's, likes walks, sight seeing, theatre, meals out, seeks genuine, professional gent, 5ft 9ins plus to make life more enjoyable. Tel: No: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 418615

JAN 35yr old blue eyed blonde, outgoing, friendly, W/LTM passionate guy to share good wine, good conversation, flirting and fun times. Tel: No: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 418606

SENSUAL tactile, attractive female, long blonde hair, blue eyes, loves travel, wining/dining, W/LTM genuine male for mutual companionship. Looks unimportant. Tel: No: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 418587

JULES, sensitive tactile, curvy brunette, hopeless romantic, seeks tall, loving male for fun, friendship and possible LTR. Tel: No: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 419033

VIRGINIA, outgoing social female, 24, tall slim and attractive, looking for fun times, maybe more. Can accommodate/travel. Tel: No: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 418845

HEATHER, well travelled solvent brunette looking to share a large glass of wine and whatever follows with affectionate man friend. Tel: No: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 419031

PAULINE, 49yrs, very attractive, curvy divorcee, affectionate and fun, seeks laid back, sincere male for an uncomplicated, loving relationship. Tel: No: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 418925

LADY young at heart, nice eyes, seeks man 42-52 with good sense of humour. Text only to Mailbox No: 4881572

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*EG send KISS12345 to 80098

GENUINE male, 58, OHAC, looking for fun lady for no strings fun. Tel: No: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 417601

PHIL 55, divorced, 5ft 10ins, slim, OHAC, seeks female, 18 plus for discreet adult fun. Tel: No: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 401875

GENUINE male, 58, OHAC, looking for fun lady for no strings fun. Tel: No: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 417601

MATURE male, 50, medium-build, varied interests, seeks true Christian female, 35-45, who enjoys evenings in and dining out, for friendship or possibly more. Tel: No: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 419283

WAYNE, 40, cheeky, good career, likes gym. Looking for a lady who likes stimulating conversation and times. Tel: No: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 419629

DARREN, 44, slim build, dark brown hair, green eyes, seeks genuine female for friendship, maybe more. Tel: No: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 418809

COLIN 48, seeks cuddly large big beautiful woman 45 to 55 for LTR, love, romance, hopefully likes cuddles, kisses, holding hands. Text only to Mailbox no: 5308886

52YRS old guy genuine down to earth looking for Mrs right for nights in and out, walking, cooking, lives life to the full. Text only to Mailbox no: 5331215

MALE looking to meet a nice lady for fun times to spend with. I am 72 and would like to meet a lady between 60 and 70. Text only to Mailbox no: 5332896

BROKEN hearted lady 39 seeks loving male to mend heart age 39/40. Text only to Mailbox No: 489116

KAY, very young 45, fit and active, no ties, seeks similar young at heart, fun male for fun times. Age/Status/looks unimportant. Tel: No: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 418577

VIVACIOUS strawberry blonde who knows just what she wants, looking for caring male for spontaneous fun relationship. Tel: No: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 418445

WENDY, 40, slim, fit, bubbly female looking to meet a tall, slim, fit, mature male who thinks he can keep up. Tel: No: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 418369

YOUNG early 40's female, GSOH, kind, caring, considerate, seeks male for friendship, possible romance. Tel: No: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 410847

CAROL 49, attractive, green eyed blonde, honest warm hearted, n/s with GSOH likes cinema, music, walking, meals out and travel seeking similar male. Text only to Mailbox No: 4283683

FEMALE, 50, short blond hair, blue eyes, 5ft 10, slim build, looking for a man 50-55 with salt and pepper hair and GSOH. Text only to Mailbox no: 4435776

HEATHER, 34, single very attractive brunette, sensual and interesting, looking to life's experiences and adventures with professional male. Tel: No: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 418193

WENDY, 40, slim, fit, bubbly female looking to meet a tall, slim, fit, mature male who thinks he can keep up. Tel: No: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 418369

EILEEN, slim green eyed brunette likes meals out and cosy nights in, seeks tall male to meet and make her laugh and brighten up her day. Tel: No: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 418347

FEMALE fun brunette, attractive, 26, seeking male for friendship, maybe more. Tel: No: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 416287

FEMALE seeking gent 55-70, down to earth, nice and intelligent who knows how to treat a lady. Tel: No: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 417195

ATTRACTIVE, fit, sporty, tactile, youthful black male seek relationship with lady. N/S. Text only to Mailbox no: 4851641

COLIN, five foot eight, blue eyes, bundle of fun to be around, likes growing fuchsias for showing, vintage tractor for showing, weekends away, going out and staying in W/LTM a lady for friendship/LTR. Tel: No: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 420089

STEVE 39, 5ft 9ins, medium build, likes walks, seeks female, slim-medium build, single mum welcome. Tel: No: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 396709

CARING male, 57, OHAC, looking for female, any race, status and age for no strings discreet fun. Tel: No: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 411461

STEVE 39, 5ft 9ins, medium build, likes walks, seeks female, slim-medium build, single mum welcome. Tel: No: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 396709

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MALE, 70, retired from NHS, seeking a lady for friendship and companionship. Tel: No: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 420147

WIDOWER 70 plus, seeking female for friendship. Love me love my dog. Tel: No: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 417439

VERY useful, attractive 58 yr old, GSOH, six foot tall, nice build, n/s, genuine, tactile, fit and sporty, looking for a woman for nights in and out. Tel: No: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 420135

TALL attractive male, 55, would like to meet older mature women 60 to 75 for close discreet fun. You only live once. Text only to Mailbox no: 4347071

I am an easygoing guy looking for a female 55-68 for a meaningful relationship. I am very sincere and honest. Text only to Mailbox no: 5362324

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6FT well built guy, nicely groomed looking for fun intimate nights or day with slim/medium build attractive lady 35-55. Text only to Mailbox no: 5132460

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overseas property

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8

Motoring

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general

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Levorgorg delivers on power

By John Griffiths

Subaru's new Levorg sports tourer is a distinctive, all-new model which poses something of a conundrum.

It is genuinely a competitor for many of the premium brand rivals in terms of performance, equipment and particularly space, as well as sporty good looks (from the front it bears a striking resemblance to the iconic WRX STi).

You also get a lot for your money at £27,495, but there's the rub: That's not 'from', that's THE price because there is only one model. It's powered by a new and highly-efficient 1.6 direct injection turbo petrol engine, and bearing in mind this is a car likely to appeal strongly to business users, there's no diesel option. Yet Subaru spent years (and a lot of money) developing a very good diesel version of its signature 'boxer' flat-four motor.

It may be because Subaru is unashamedly a 'niche' rather than a volume manufacturer. But perhaps it is also dipping its toes in the water and assessing the views of its dealers and customers before widening the range.

The Levorg is a distinctive model. While it has sporting looks, it has more room than the majority of pseudo-SUVs which are increasingly popular, plus the benefit of all-wheel drive, all-weather stability which all but a few of that genre lack.

If you want to get yourself noticed in the company car park, or on the road, the Levorg could be for you.

It's quick enough (0 to 62mph) in 8.9 seconds, yet is still capable of averaging nearly 45mpg which is good for a 4WD petrol car of this size.

And inside it is bigger than it looks, with a 522-litre boot (rising to 1,446 litres with the rear seats folded) and is more than a match for most of its premium rivals for passenger space, particularly when it comes to rear leg room. It also has, as Subaru is quick to point out, the most luxurious interior the company has ever produced.

The Levorg is the spiritual successor to the late-lamented (by Subaru enthusiasts, anyway) Legacy, a sort of grown up version of the overtly sporting Impreza. But it is actually based on the 2003 fourth generation Legacy, not the less popular fifth generation model, while the once top-of-the-range Legacy Outback has evolved into a separate model in its own right, much beloved by the likes of country vets.

While the Legacy was also a saloon, the biggest seller was the estate format so it's logical that Subaru would choose this style for the Levorg. But it's no chunky load-lugger: sports tourer is an apt description since its front end mirrors that of the mighty WRX rally car (complete with signature bonnet air scoop) and has a sleek, low-slung look despite the big 18in alloy wheels.

It drives well, too. The 1.6 turbo engine has the classic 'boxer' sound; and 170PS of power with a useful 250 NM of torque available from low revs. Available only with Subaru's Lineartronic CVT automatic transmission, it's a bit of a smoothy, with a burst of overtaking acceleration. With the press of a button on the steering wheel, you can sharpen up engine and throttle responses for a sportier drive, and control gear changes with the 'paddles' behind the steering wheel.

It is sure footed, with quick and precise steering so that it never feels like a big car.

It has the latest versions of Subaru's all-wheel drive and vehicle dynamic control systems, well proven over the years on the rally-bred Impreza and WRX.



While it has sporting looks, it has more room than the majority of pseudo-SUVs which are increasingly popular, plus the benefit of all-wheel drive

In normal driving 60 per cent of power goes to the front, and 40 to the rear. But if the electronics detect any slippage, a higher portion of power is diverted to the rear to maintain stability and traction in a wide variety of conditions.

There's also an active torque vectoring system, which brakes the outside wheels under heavy cornering to give you a neutral line through bends, avoiding over or under steer. There's a new suspension system, too, beefed up to reduce pitch and roll under hard cornering, but it's well damped so the ride quality doesn't suffer.

Inside, the Levorg lives up to Subaru's billing. Wider than the old Legacy, it comes

with a single 'GT' trim level which includes leather trim, heated front seats, stainless steel sill plates and pedals, automatic wipers, front and side window defrosters, dual-zone air conditioning, multi-function steering wheel, and a central touchscreen control system for audio and connectivity functions, which also serves as the reversing camera screen. The safety package includes multiple airbags, hill start assist and brake assist as well as electronic stability systems, lane-change, blind-spot and 'rear-crossing' alerts.

The Levorg has a 1,500kg towing limit. Its official economy figure is 44.8mpg, with a CO2 emissions rating of 164g/km.

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Mini World Live show dates

One of the most exciting and interactive events dedicated to the most iconic small car in Britain is set to return to the calendar in 2016, with Mini World Live promising to be even bigger and better than the show's debut earlier this year.

The initial event was deemed a great success, attracting hundreds of beautifully restored classics, modified performance cars and the UK's leading Mini specialists and experts to Rockingham Motor Speedway.

Thousands of Mini enthusiasts made their way to the Northants venue for the first ever Mini World Live, and that number looks set to grow further, with the organisers promising even more action and more of a festival feel for the show, which is backed by three major Mini-related magazine titles – MiniWorld, Mini Magazine and Modern MINI.

The show will feature attractions catering for fans of both classic and modern Minis, including a huge retail village, show and shine areas, club displays and on-track action, the details of which will be confirmed nearer to the date.

Live music and refreshments will also form a core part of the event, with

camping available the evening before to ensure it benefits from a vibrant, festival feel.

Event manager Kat Chappell said: "Mini owners are renowned for loving a good show, so it was great to see Mini World Live get such a great reception in its first year. We now have a place in the calendar and are delighted that the event has become one of the major 'go-to' events for fans of both classic and modern Minis. We can't wait to grow it further this year."

Full details of the show, the cars and the various activities will be announced nearer the date, on the event website, or via the official Facebook page and twitter feeds.



Switch to safer winter tyres

As cold weather approaches, local Vauxhall retailer, Stourbridge Motor House, is making it simple for Vauxhall owners in Stourbridge to make the switch to safer winter tyres with the opening of its Tyre Hotel.

Ensuring that summer tyres are kept in tip top condition, they will be treated to a valet on arrival and regularly rotated to prevent warping. Each tyre will be properly labelled and kept away from any substances that could cause deterioration or damage to the rubber.

Michael Casey, general manager at Stourbridge Motor House, said: "Although the safety implications of

changing your tyres are clear, unfortunately motorists are often reluctant to swap their wheels because of storage issues.

"When customers purchase winter tyres, we will whisk their summer set away to one of nine Tyre Hotels across the country. Customer service is paramount for us therefore motorists can expect a swift check-in by one of our knowledgeable service team."

Essentially when the temperature drops below seven degrees, winter tyres use a rubber compound with high silica content and have a specially designed tread pattern to perform better

in colder conditions by providing increased grip on the road.

Running alongside the Tyre Hotel, Stourbridge Motor House is offering area winter safety checks until March 31, 2016. The check is £19.99 and comprises a 25 point visual health check and top-ups of coolant, brake fluid, screen wash and engine oil.*

For more information about the Tyre Hotel or the winter safety checks, contact Stourbridge Motor House at High Street, Amblecote, Stourbridge, West Midlands DY8 4DG. Alternatively, go online to www.stourbridgemotorhouse.co.uk or call 01384 447970.

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A desirable SUV with very clever technology

By Matt Joy

Audi is stepping up its provision of electric cars with a dual-power version of its Q7 SUV, but does it offer any worthwhile advantages over the regular model?

The second-generation Q7 hasn't even reached its first birthday, but there's a new version just around the corner. Lighter, stiffer and packed with more technology than ever before, the new Q7 is exactly the kind of car that big Audi buyers are looking for. But this e-tron version is something altogether different.

Mixing diesel power with electric motors, the Q7 e-tron is a plug-in hybrid promising exceptional fuel consumption and emissions alongside similar performance, similar pricing and barely diminished practicality, although it still has to compete with the overall excellence of the standard car.

To look at, there's nothing to distinguish the electric Q7 from its combustion-only counterpart. If you're really paying attention, you may notice the additional filler flap, but the e-tron is as chunky and prestigious as the standard car. It's a matter of taste of course, but the Q7 has plenty of presence.

On the image front, Audi has always been strong, and while emissions issues may have had a negative effect, what better way to move on from that than with an SUV that can run on just electric power?

The Q7 e-tron is unquestionably a sizeable car, but in e-tron guise there are a couple of compromises. The substantial battery pack sits in the boot where the third row of seats would normally sit, so the Q7 e-tron is a five-seater only, although you still get the flexibility of individual chairs in the second row that can slide and fold. The boot space is also reduced as a result, but there's still a sizeable 650 litres on offer with the seats in place.

The cabin itself is as spacious and comfortable as the standard Q7, with generous space front and rear as well as excellent materials. The Q7's virtual cockpit comes into its own here too, giving you a full update on what the complex power train is up to.

Complex it may be, but the Q7 makes life easy for you where driving is concerned. Defaulting to electric mode on start-up, acceleration from rest is smooth, near-silent and usefully brisk considering its size.

There are four operation modes to choose from; EV mode, hybrid, battery save where the charge stays unused until you request it and battery charge, where the engine will charge the battery whilst you drive.

So far it's as with most other plug-in hybrids, but the Q7 has another trick up its sleeve. You can leave it in hybrid and it will engage the battery, the diesel engine or both depending on how you drive but if you use the sat nav Predictive Assistant will determine what combination to use based on the road – and even the traffic – in the miles ahead.

As the driver all you notice is that this Q7 is even quieter than the standard car, and while the increased weight might mean it's not quite as quick or quite so agile, the potential economy results are worth the small sacrifice.

On the one hand the Q7 in e-tron form is significantly more expensive than a comparable diesel model, but that extra outlay brings with it a number of significant advantages. As well as being obviously cleaner and greener than a standard diesel it qualifies for the Government's £5,000 grant, will pay no vehicle excise duty or London congestion charge. It would also bring substantial BIK savings for company car buyers.

Not everyone needs so much space and comfort of course so there are smaller plug-in hybrids and conventional electric cars that can be as frugal, but no rival can offer the same combination of comfort, space, luxury and economy all at the same time. Company car drivers will love it, families with the funds will love it too and active lifestyle types with a conscious might not balk at the idea either. It's clever technology that is well executed and installed in a useful and desirable SUV.

This car summed up in a single word: Gamechanger. If this car was a: car of the future in 1980, it wouldn't have been thought possible.



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Tivoli a pleasant surprise

By Ian Donaldson

A smattering of Spanish would have come in handy in deepest Bedfordshire as we tried to tell the SsangYong's sat nav to take us back to base.

Someone had set the system for the land of paella and siestas and instructions came out of the Tivoli's dashboard with a softly spoken southern inflection, which sounded lovely but meant precious little.

But you don't keep a motoring writer from his lunch and the destination was eventually plumbed into the TomTom and away we went – in a car that was proving a bit of a surprise. Taking us on the mystery tour of an unheralded but handsome part of middle England was the latest model of a car you probably haven't heard of yet – the SsangYong Tivoli.

Built in South Korea by a company known until now for its range of tough but basic machines, many with an off-road potential, the Tivoli marks a serious move towards European respectability, where mere cheapness doesn't always succeed.

A decade or so ago a couple of other Koreans – Hyundai and Kia – began their climb upmarket and have succeeded beyond perhaps even their dreams. Can SsangYong do it too?

The earlier Tivoli versions, arriving mid-2015 made a firm case for a positive answer – 'yes!' – and at prices that start at £12,950 for a front-driver with petrol engine.

Which makes it great value rather than an absolute steal; often a sign that makers

reckons their cars are now good enough to entice buyers without needing a bargain basement price tag.

SsangYong was right; the first Tivolis were decent enough to drive and very well kitted out for the money.

They also felt better put together (on the inside in particular) than opposition selling for more.

But what about a Tivoli selling for more than £20,000 when you've added metallic paint (£500) and a £400 styling pack with fancy alloys, black roof, spoiler and door mirrors? That's moving the car deep into the European mainstream, where you'll find a host of smart cars looking for style-savvy buyers.

Well, driving is believing and SsangYong has a winner on its hands, so long as it can persuade you to sit in the car and then take it for a drive.

Should your route take in a deep waterhole and a couple of crazily angled slopes, the admiration factor will ramp up quickly. For here is a car that genuinely surprised in places no sane owner will ever take it. A winter's drive home on snowy roads is going to be chicken feed for this newest version of the Tivoli.

The all-wheel drive system puts all the power through the front wheels until it detects slippage, when the rears are instantly brought into action. This ought to mean better fuel economy than in a car with all the wheels working all the time.

You can have a six-speed manual gearbox or an automatic unit in your Tivoli 4x4 but both will be powered by the same 1.6 diesel engine that became an option in the 2WD range some months ago.

It produces 113bhp, enough for 107mph



Well, driving is believing and SsangYong has a winner on its hands, so long as it can persuade you to sit in the car.

top speed with the auto box and the sprint to 62mph in 12.3 seconds (109mph/12.0 seconds for the manual), with the auto 'box hitting emissions and fuel consumption, so that the figures of 156g/km and 47.9mpg average look underwhelming – stick to the DIY gearbox and things improve to 123g/km and 60.1mpg.

Out on proper road surfaces the diesel auto 4x4 Tivoli hums along nicely, allowing you to admire its fit and finish and start to take in the goodies that this top version has on board.

Standard kit on the ELX includes sat-

ellite navigation (Spanish is optional!), a superbly clear reversing camera, leather upholstery and heated front seats, climate control, keyless entry and start, auto dipping interior mirror, cruise control and (hurrah), a space saver spare wheel.

The ELX 4x4 auto costs £19,500, a six-speed manual is £1,000 less and the EX 4x4 diesel with a bit less kit is £17,100.

SsangYong thinks 500 people will take a Tivoli 4x4 in 2016.

They may be surprised, especially if they can persuade showroom visitors to take a drive.

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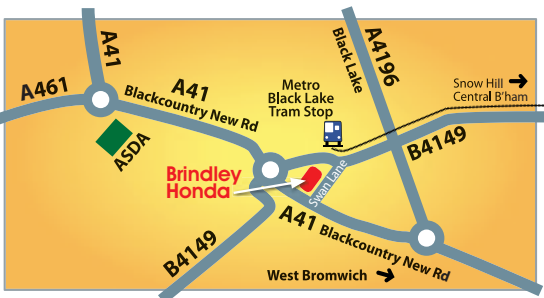
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Runners get festive with the Turkey Trot

THERE was more festive fun at the weekend for athletes from Dudley Kingswinford Running Club as they took part in Wolverhampton & Bilston AC's Turkey Trot.

This is a five-mile race on tarmac starting and finishing on the track at the host club's Aldersley Stadium in Wolverhampton.

It was an opportunity for a final blast before Christmas and, with each finisher receiving a turkey presentation pack, it was a chance to beat the queues and get their Christmas dinner.

The race was won by Michael Aspinall, listed as unattached to a club, finishing in a time of 25.39 from the hosts Martin Williams who claimed 2nd place in 25.57 and Harry Halford, also of Wolves, who finished in 27.03.

In the ladies race Telford AC's Sarah Mackness claimed victory in 30.30, from Sofie Kent of Aldershot Farnham & District in 32.20 and Cara Percival of Wolves who stopped the clock in 34.13.

Of the DK runners in attendance Mark Homer was first hoop home in 32.58 in 37th place and 3rd M50, Tracey Alderson was 81st in 35.49 and 3rd F45.

Andy Litchfield was 88th in 36.22, Malcolm Pillar was 96th and 1st M70 in 37m, Jacqui Elson-Whittaker was 156th in 39.57, John Glover was 205th in 44.46, Meg Downen was 220th in 45.56.

Nick Murphy was 247th in 47.57, Lisa Hadlington was 290th in 52.18 and Nicola Wilkinson finished in 1.01.13 to take 317th place in a field of 323 runners.

Gabby's days at Villa look numbered

GABBY AGBONLAHOR'S days at Villa could be numbered with the club open to offers for the 29-year-old forward in January.

The club captain hasn't scored for nine months and didn't feature in the squad for their defeat against Arsenal.

Agbonlahor has struggled to impress new manager Remi Garde and if the Frenchman receives the right offer, Villa's longest-serving player looks likely to be out of the door.

After coming through the youth ranks, Agbonlahor made his debut for Villa in 2006 at the age of 19.

He won three England caps in 2008 and 2009. But the striker's goals have dried up recently. He's only scored 10 goals in the last two-and-a-half seasons.

He's picked up more yellow cards in that time.

Stour take lead and dig in for win

Stourbridge 27 Luctonians 18

WITH a heavy pitch and visitors already deep into a relegation battle this game never looked likely to be a festival of high speed of running rugby.

Stour instead fed off a steady flow of penalties as the visitors transgressed time and again at the breakdown, content to close out victory through the right boot of place kicker Chris Scott.

Lucs made first use of a stiff southerly breeze, scrum half Louis Silver landing a penalty when a Stour tackler failed to roll away.

A speculative Lucs' kick through took a deflection that wrong-footed the Stour cover and set up a try for flanker Henry Munkley, giving the visitors a 13

point lead.This stung Stour into action.With a huge overlap beckoning the ball was moved right where fullback Rod Petty crossed for the try.

As their scrum starting to impose themselves on the lightweight Lucs forwards Stour were back for more straight from the restart, hooker Billy Harding finishing off another neat set of interchanges to bring the hosts within a point.

Referee Callum Sharp lost patience with Lucs spoiling tactics and despatched lock forward John Kelly to the sinbin, but their 14 men managed to hold on to the slender advantage until the halftime break.

Stour got their noses ahead with a Scott penalty

just after the restart, but having beefed up their pack with front row replacements Lucs hit back with an opportunist try for fullback John Morris.

But that was to be the last time they troubled the scoreboard operators, Stour happy to grind out a win by playing the game in Lucs' half and kicking the penalties that came their way.

Lucs lost prop Joe White to the sin bin, Scott landing two further penalties during his absence to stretch the lead to 24-18.

He hit the final nail into the coffin with a further penalty to deny the visitors even a losing bonus point.

Stour now take a well-earned Christmas break.

Hero Ashley set for big return to club

CRADLEY'S 2013 title hero Ashley Morris will make a sensational return to the club in 2016.

The Penkridge-born youngster captained the Heathens to an unforgettable clean sweep of honours before departing ahead of 2014.

However, he has failed to secure an Elite League or Premier League team spot ahead of next season, opening the door for him to return to the National League.

Morris, 21, admits there was only one club for him once it became clear he would need to step back down to the third tier.

After enjoying four memorable seasons in green, red and white, he is delighted to be back ahead of the new campaign.

With ambitions of securing a team spot at a higher level later in the season, Morris is desperate to pick up where he left off as one of the National League's top riders.

And he is eyeing another dominant season for Will Pottinger's side as they look to regain the league title from local rivals Birmingham.

Brilliant

"I'm really looking forward to being back at Cradley," Morris said. "Over the years they've taught me a lot and I've had some great times riding for the Heathens, so it's brilliant to be back.

"There was only one place I was going to consider if I was going to go back to the National League, so I'm happy they've given me the chance to ride for them again.

"It's a shame I couldn't get a Premier League team place, and some of the new rules haven't worked in my favour and have possibly squeezed me out a little.

"I still want to stay on the bike and get as much track time as I can, so being back at Cradley is a good move for me at the moment.

"It was a no-brainer as soon as I spoke to them, and I'm excited to get back to wearing a Heathens race jacket. Hopefully things can carry on the way they were in 2013, that was a great season for me and the club.

"It's obviously going to be tough for us to replicate that success, but that's what we are aiming for and I'm hoping I can have another good season personally to help make sure we do well."

Morris joins Max Clegg and Bradley Andrews



Ashley Morris and Max Clegg riding together. Picture John Hipkiss Photography

in an impressive-looking Heathens side so far with the action starting next March back at Monmore Green.

Meanwhile British Speedway's National League will welcome two new clubs in 2016.

The sport will return to the Isle of Wight's Smallbrook Stadium after a two-year absence with the newly branded Warriors.

And Belle Vue will enter a Colts team into the third tier based at their new home, the National Speedway

Stadium in Manchester. The news means 12 clubs will come to the tapes next season in what promises to be an exciting time for the league which encourages the development of young British riders.

Club bosses held their AGM at the British Speedway HQ in Warwickshire on Wednesday and they set a new team building limit of 40-points per club. They have also scrapped all tactical rides – and the league title will revert to the play-off system.

Convincing points win for fighter Gelder

COSELEY'S Jamie Gelder scored a convincing points win fighting overseas under the Malta Boxing Commission banner.

Gelder featured at light heavyweight on a show at the Aria Complex in the Maltese town of San Gwann recently, writes Craig Birch.

And 'Danger' proved trouble for debutant Goran Bogdanovic in the home corner, winning all four rounds comprehensively over-the-distance.

The 23-year-old set a fast pace and forced his opponent onto the back-foot, with Bogdanovic enjoying his best spells of pressure against the ropes.

That was when he could back Gelder up and let rip with fast and furious combinations of his own, although he couldn't save the result.

All three judges all ruled in favour of Gelder, Nick Aish and Stephen Farrugia by 40-36 landslide while Gwayn Bonsfield had it 39-37.

It tidies his pro record up to three wins from nine bouts, having lost six straight contests since his hand was last raised in September 2014.

It was his first outing since he was outpointed by Liam Milner in Liverpool three months ago, with his two KO defeats coming last winter.

Alex Hughes and Luke Crowcroft both stopped him in the the first round, although he cried foul through injury and low blows.

His luck first took a turn for the worst after he was outpointed by Mike Byles, the two points he had deducted for holding costing him a draw.

Youngster is learning lots from Saido

ALBION academy striker Tahvon Campbell 'loves' playing alongside Saido Berahino in the under-21s.

The 18-year-old opened the scoring in a 3-0 win over Swansea under-21s recently, pouncing on a blocked Berahino shot before coolly tucking the ball in.

He then repaid the favour to last season's top scorer, winning a penalty in the 80th minute, which Berahino converted.

Campbell played as an out-and-out striker while Berahino dropped deeper into a number 10 role, and the youngster enjoyed linking up with the senior player.

"He's got lots of experience," said Campbell. "I just love playing with him and learning from him. He helps me a lot."

The young forward has a frightening turn of pace.

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Sport

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Ashley set for big comeback to club

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Town's woes deepen with Malvern four

Tipton Town 0 Malvern 4

TIPTON Town's woes were further deepened with a 4-0 home defeat to Malvern Town in the West Midlands Premier League.

Town keeper Sandip Bains made a good stop after 10 minutes to deny Brian Craven but it wasn't going to be a good day to be between the sticks.

After 18 minutes a hotly-disputed penalty gave the visitors the chance to go in front and Lee Hooper drove firmly past Bains from 12 yards to open the scoring for Malvern.

Ben Hayes fired over the top for Malvern before they extended their lead just a few minutes later.

The Tipton defence were unable to clear and Hayes converted at the far post.

Former player, Mark Ganderton, having just rejoined Tipton, impressed with neat and tidy footwork until being unceremoniously upended by Chris Parker earning the latter player a booking for the tackle.

Tipton narrowly failed to reduce the arrears just before the break. Sangha's hard graft down the right flank created an opportunity for Ganderton but his effort went just wide keeping the visitors in the lead.

After 63 minutes Sangha crossed for Gregg Grey but visiting keeper Charlie Weaver made an outstanding save to keep Tipton heading towards a shutout.

With Tipton pushing more players forward, they were caught in the 71st minute as Dave Reynolds finished off an incisive break that brought another score.

And with injury time being played Tipton's crest-fallen defence capitulated again to allow Jack Gullity to net a fourth goal for the visitors.

Sports score two to grab the win over The Lockmen

Willenhall 0 Dudley Sports 2

WILLENHALL were left to rue missed chances as Dudley Sports twice caught them on the break in the second half to record a win.

With injuries, suspensions, work and departures biting them hard, The Reds made a good start with several new signings looking particularly bright early on. The Greens looked dangerous especially the speed of Shepherd Machingaut.

Just before the break Jamie Nugent's determination saw him win a lost cause and force Joe Sidaway into a good low save to the keeper's left.

Lloyd Sanders produced a brilliant cross which Lovell turned onto the bar with the keeper beaten on 67 minutes before Sports countered at speed.

Ross Clarke mis-timed a tackle and was subsequently booked after a good advantage was played and the resulting cross was turned in by Craig Lewis on 69 minutes.

Two minutes into stoppage time, Anil Sunder expertly guided home with his head from a very tight angle.

Old Hales keep control of the game

Old Halesonians 22 Syston 8

HALES found themselves once again defending for much of the opening period although the home pack dominated from the kick off.

What was also obvious was that despite many chances to gain the upper hand Hales wasted kicks and failed to turn pressure into points. Syston seemed set to take their chances when opportunity arose.

Hales prop Matt Young replaced an Injured Louis Padian after only 10 minutes, without causing any difference to the dominant scrum.

And so it was on 30 minutes, and against the run of play, after some open running from man of

Rugby

the match flanker Max Macfarlane the ball was taken into the Syston 22.

A scrum resulted enabling the Hales pack to steam roll the ball towards the line with the Syston Pack unable to cope. The referee awarded a penalty try, converted by Oli Rayner.

From the second half kick off with forwards Tom King, Tom Jordan, Jay Martin and Macfarlane made ground.

After 12 phases of play from a charge led by Tom King, the ball was fed to the ever reliable

Jordan who smashed his way over for the second try of the day.

Hales seemed to put the inconsistency of the first half behind them on 49 minutes. The ball moved through the team with ease before arriving at Luke Smith whose pace was too much for the Syston defence, a touch down in the corner for the third try to lead.

With more aspects of play being controlled by Hales it was a well taken penalty which put Syston on the score sheet.

After 70 minutes the unstoppable Smith dived over for the fourth try and bonus point.

The dying minutes saw a final score of 22 - 8.

WAITE BREAKS HIS GOAL DUCK

Halesowen 1 Frickley Athletic 1

NATHAN Waite notched his first goal of the season but a late Frickley equaliser meant Halesowen had to settle for their sixth draw in eight league games.

Jean-Michel Gueyes created most of Halesowen's danger, although Frickley forced a series of first-half corners.

Visiting centre-half Jon Cyrus went closest but failed to make a good enough contact with a free header from Bradley Grayson's 42nd-minute corner.

A minute before the interval, a cheeky chip from Aaron Griffiths was clawed away from the top corner by the Frickley goalkeeper Sebastian Malkowski.

But the Yeltz took the lead just three minutes into the second half when Gueyes delivered a dangerous right-wing cross for Waite to head home from close range.

Rebound

Waite then struck a rebound into the side netting after Malkowski parried away Malcolm Melvin's long range shot.

The visitors made a late double substitution and the change paid off just seconds later as substitute Christopher Wood's flick set up Grayson to equalise with a fine 80th-minute low drive.

Halesowen almost snatched an injury-time winner but debut substitute Kaiman Anderson was denied in front of goal by Malkowski's superb point-blank save after Gueyes made a mazy run and cross from the left.

Halesowen Town: Rowley, Gueyes, Griffiths (Summerfield 79), Denny (c), Morrison, Lewis, Charlton, Bragoli, Daniels (Anderson 44), Waite (Turner 82), Melvin.

Subs not used: Connolly, Hull.

Frickley Athletic: Malkowski; Bruce, Jeff (Wood 79), Hinsley, Cyrus, Ible, Davie, Armstrong (Akeroyd 79), Hazel (Hornsey 62), Grayson, Williams.

Subs not used: Parkinson, Hood.

Referee: Chris Husband

Attendance: 301

Wolves suffer a painful loss



Jordan Graham of Wolverhampton Wanderers with Jack Hunt of Sheffield Wednesday and Sam Hutter of Wolves

Sheffield Weds 4 Wolves 1

THERE is a right way and a wrong way to lose a football match.

This painful surrender, in which Wolves could be thankful they only lost 4-1, was definitely the wrong way.

One of these teams was exciting to watch, clinical in front of goal, positive and energetic in midfield, organised and difficult to beat at the back. The other was Wolves.

Ten minutes after Benik Afobe's opening goal, they were behind, and always chasing the game thereafter.

Well, you say 'chasing', but the only thing

they were chasing was a lost cause. Their brittle confidence shattered yet again by the slightest glimpse of adversity, Wolves' defending was almost as bad as it had been in the capitulation to Leeds at Molineux just four days earlier.

After that defeat you expected a reaction from Jackett's team.

They began in the correct manner, pressing Wednesday high up the field, forcing errors from the home defenders.

But after the equaliser it was a completely different game.

What's so disheartening is that if Wolves had won their last two matches, they'd be just three points off the top six.

Wolves boss sends up rescue flares

UNDER-FIRE Wolves boss Kenny Jackett has sent out an SOS to the club's board to sign some players in January, saying: "These players need help."

Jackett has called on the Wolves hierarchy to bring in experienced heads to help his young and underperforming side.

It is understood Jackett's job is safe – for now – with Wolves chief executive Jez Moxey reluctant to pull the trigger on a man who has overseen a rejuvenation of the club before their recent struggles.

And the head coach is desperate for reinforcements in the January transfer window to instigate an improvement in his team's flagging fortunes.

When asked what had to be done to transform Wolves' form, Jackett said: "A combination of the players recognising what they need to do to compete in the Championship and then understanding the basics of it and the decision-making process during the course of the game. And then, at the right time, obviously some help from the outside as well is going to be needed, we can see that."

"Yes, a lot of the players have something and we have a number of good players."

"I do think though they need some help and they need some help during the course of the game, because the decision making, the managing of the game when we're maybe in front, it just isn't there at the moment."

Wolves were convincingly outplayed in their 4-1 defeat to Sheffield Wednesday at Hillsborough on Sunday.

It came on the back of another defensive horror show against Leeds three days earlier.

And the two losses leave Wolves 17th in the Championship table, closer to the relegation zone than the top six.

Goalkeeper Foster back in training

ALBION keeper Ben Foster is back in training after nearly eight months out with a knee injury.

The England shot-stopper returned to training with the rest of the squad.

It is hoped the 32-year-old could be challenging for a return to the side within two or three weeks.

However, he will face a fight with goal-keeping incumbent Boaz Myhill who has been impressing between the posts in Foster's absence.

Foster damaged his cruciate ligament in March and was originally pencilled in to return in October but suffered a setback during the autumn.

★★★

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